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Art and architecture in the medieval period

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Cairo's visual culture so impressed the medieval scholar Ibn Khaldūn that he pronounced the city the *umm al-dunya* ("center [lit. "mother",] of the world"). Cities and their buildings stood at the center of the visual culture of medieval Egypt. Recognized as significant forms in themselves, the cities and their buildings both provided a central focus and constituted an underlying structure to which other elements of the visual world related. Medieval authors saw this structure evolving in the visual world they described.

Ibn Khaldūn was overwhelmed by the richness of Cairo's arts, particularly in its architecture and the related arts of woodworking, gilding and masonry. He noted as well those arts he understood as supporting a luxurious lifestyle such as textiles, fine glass, ceramics, costly papers and books, and the working of precious metals. To Ibn Khaldūn, Cairo was the epitome of "sedentary culture," a term he used to highlight the role of cities as the locus of civilization and as a fundamental art form in themselves. The luxury and diversity he found in early fifteenth-century Cairo was something he believed went hand-in-hand with the strong dynasties which had maintained it as the capital from the tenth century on. He noted also that travelers spread its sedentary culture throughout the Mediterranean by bringing Cairene luxuries back to their home towns.[1]

Indeed, Cairo's visual culture overwhelmed its many visitors and caused its own scholars to laud its greatness, and it also expressed the cultural norms dominant in Egypt. Nevertheless, during the medieval period other cities were also important in the cultural life of Egypt. For example, Qūṣ, the provincial capital and seat of the government of the Ṣaʿīd, was the entrepôt of Red Sea and Nubian trade, as well as a way-station for pilgrims on the *ḥajj*. This role, which it assumed from Aswān in the middle of the eleventh century and maintained until the end of the Mamlūk dynasty in 1517,

[1] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. by Franz Rosenthal. 3 vols. Bolligen Series XLIII, (New York, 1958), vol. 2, pp.233–305.

assured the building of sectarian structures (such as mosques, *khānqāhs*, tombs and churches), of public, commercial structures (such as *wikālas*), and of family houses of great size, as well as the support of the other related arts. Throughout the entire medieval period, Alexandria, while supporting a full range of notable buildings, also remained an important port city. Its wealthy population wore the most luxurious fabrics, and also amassed noteworthy libraries of fine books. Practices current in the capital were brought to these cities by members of the ruling groups who commissioned the construction of new buildings or renovations at important sites, and who endowed institutions. The practice of everyday life in these cities also fostered the development of a visual culture independent of the capital, one that created other visual links, such as the funerary building practices that linked Qūṣ with Aswān in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The visual cultures of these cities are less well known to us than that of Cairo. They have attracted less attention from medieval and modern scholars and visitors, and in these cities far fewer traces of medieval practices have survived.[2]

Understanding the practices in the visual arts in Egypt from 640 to 1517 requires a critical knowledge of the evidence for those practices. Not only is what remains important, but knowledge of the transformations in form, function and meaning that have taken place over time are essential for understanding the past. Cities, buildings, objects, and books that have remained to the present day do so because in some way their forms or functions have served succeeding generations, with the exception, of course, of those elements accidentally buried or abandoned. Understanding Egypt's visual practices also mandates two different strategies for reconstructing visual culture, namely by noting historical change and dynastic change.

Knowledge of the arts of Egypt, its cities, its buildings – the full range of its visual expressions – comes to us from a number of sources. Buildings and artifacts still extant provide a primary body of evidence. Buildings with foundations dating to the medieval period remain in several cities, and to this day many continue to serve social functions. Archaeological excavations have revealed aspects of domestic and commercial life, and have given us insights into building practices for water supply and sanitation systems.[3]

[2] Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo,1976); Garcin, "Remarques sur un plan topographique de la grande mosquée de Qūṣ," *AI*, 9 (1970), 97–108; K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 2 vols., 3 parts (New York, 1979), II. A. Udovitch, "A Tale of Two Cities: Commercial Relations between Cairo and Alexandria," in *The Medieval City* (New Haven, 1977).

[3] Irene A. Bierman, "Urban Memory and the Preservation of Monuments," in Jere L. Bacharach (ed.), *The Restoration and Conservation of Islamic Monuments in Egypt* (Cairo, 1995), 1–12; Wladyslaw Kubiak, *Al-Fusṭāṭ: Its Foundation and Early Urban Development* (Cairo, 1982); George Scanlon and W. Kubiak, "Excavations at Fusṭāṭ," *JARCE*, 4–21 (1965–78); Roland P. Gayraud, "Isṭabl 'Antar," *AI*, 25–30 (1991–96); A. R. Guest, "The Foundation of Fusṭāṭ," *JRAS*, January 1907.

Objects from the medieval period, whole and in part, are found both in Egypt and in collections and museums around the world. These range from unglazed ceramics, simple metalware, glass, textiles, papyrus and paper to finely worked objects in a wide range of media, and to exquisitely prepared works on paper with elaborate illuminations and illustrations. Egypt is one of the few places in the world where the soil and climate have preserved textiles in significant amounts. In addition to textiles made in Egypt, those fabricated in the Indian Ocean areas are especially well represented in the archaeological finds. When urban growth in Cairo in the twentieth century necessitated the overbuilding of medieval cemetery areas, even more textiles were revealed, increasing our knowledge of medieval Muslim and Christian burial practices.[4]

Drawings, engravings and photographs of cities, buildings and objects as well as maps – all practices of representation – are sources of information that had a profound effect on the understanding of that world, because they have been used as evidence and as illustrations for a large number of widely disseminated academic and popular studies about Egypt, from the eighteenth century until the present day. Two large-scale projects warrant detailed summary here because they provided the bases of the images of medieval Egypt, especially of medieval Cairo, and one brought about substantial changes to the buildings themselves.

The first project, the encyclopaedic *Description de l'Égypte* compiled and illustrated by the scholars who accompanied Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt in 1798–1802, consists of twenty-one large-format volumes.[5] Like Ibn Khaldūn before them, the French scholars were captivated by the art of building found in Egypt's cities, and filled the volumes dedicated to the modern period with favored views: city- and street-scapes, skylines, and architectural studies of individual buildings including measured ground plans (see Plate 1). These are invaluable images of Egypt's buildings and cities from the turn of the nineteenth century and in many instances provide the only record of buildings no longer extant. The depictions of Christian

[4] See especially Esin Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam Art of the Mamluks* (Washington, DC, 1981); A. F. Kendrick, *Catalogue of the Muhammadan Textiles of the Medieval Period* (London, 1924); Kendrick, *Catalogue of Textiles from the Burying-Grounds in Egypt*, 3 vols. (London, 1924). See also E. Kühnel and L. Bellinger, *Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics: Umayyad, 'Abbasid, Fatimid* (Washington, DC, 1952); Jochen A. Sokoly, "Between Life and Death: The Funerary Context of Tiraz Textiles," in *Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Aktuelle Probleme* (Riggisberg, 1997), 71–78; Gayraud, "Istabl 'Antar," *AI*, 28 (1994), 1–27.

[5] Nine volumes of text and twelve folio volumes of illustrations, Paris, 1803–28. Recent volumes have appeared in which the images (but not the text) from these volumes are republished, making them readily available, albeit in significantly smaller scale. For a selection of images with contemporary commentary, see Robert Anderson and Ibrahim Fawzy (eds.), *Egypt Revealed* (Cairo, 1987). For the complete collection of images, without any original text, see *Description de l'Égypte* (Cologne, 1994).

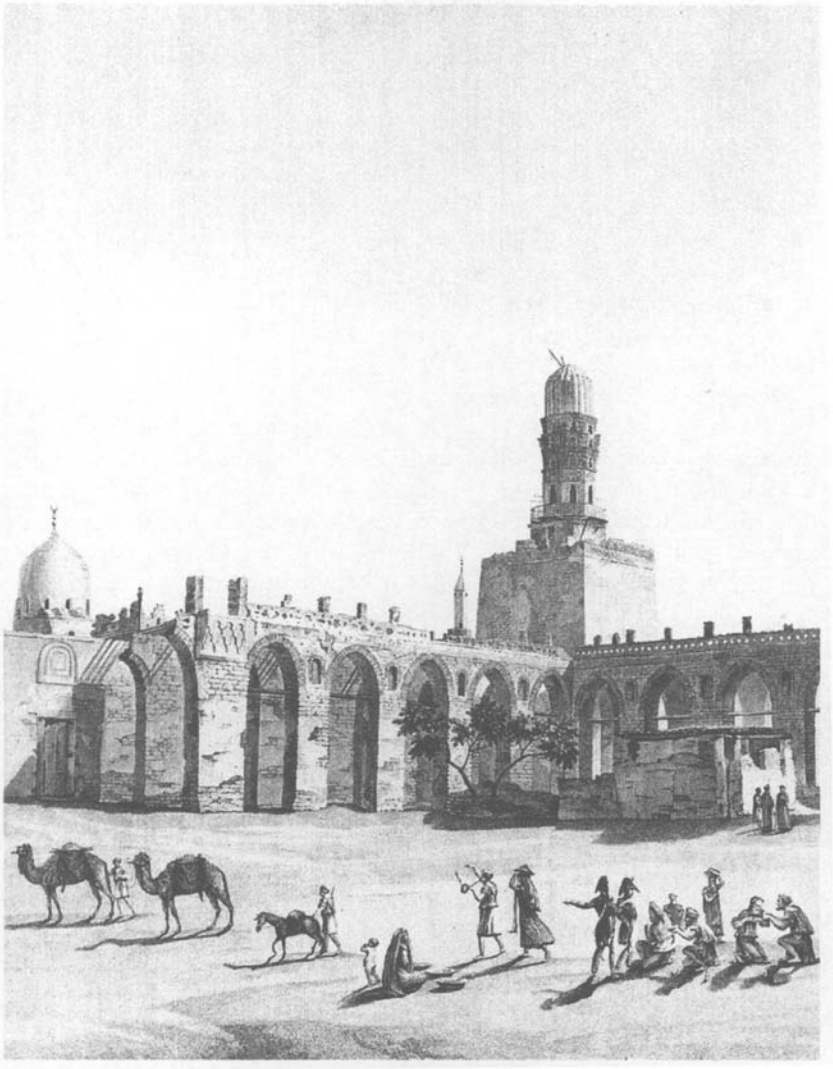

Plate 1 The mosque of al-Ḥākim.

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sectarian structures are limited to the monasteries in the Wādī Naṭrūn and that of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. Urban churches and synagogues were not included.

Mapping, in the modern cartographic mode, was also used in the *Description* and underpins current knowledge of Egypt's cities. Esnē, Qūṣāyr, Suez, Alexandria, as well as Cairo were surveyed in this manner for the first time, and measured maps were produced which indicated major streets, major mosques, and urban agricultural areas. These have served as the base for subsequent cartographic studies of the cities.[6] Several local maps of Cairo helped the reader locate the streets, buildings, and major recreation areas, *birak* or inundation pools, represented in the drawings.

The second large-scale endeavor, the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe, was launched by the government in 1882 specifically to direct attention to the Arab arts.[7] Although a direct result of the architectural studies launched by the *Description*, it served as a corrective to the intense interest in the pharaonic period that the *Description* had generated in Europe and in Egypt by drawing attention to the Arab period.[8] Over time the Comité's scope expanded to include monuments of Coptic art, and the area of its authority came to include monuments throughout Egypt, but the main focus of its attention remained the monuments of Cairo.[9] The Comité was responsible for making the inventory of buildings designated as monuments of Arab art, for renovating, restoring and rebuilding them, for creating a museum for Arab art, and for commissioning the first illustrated catalogue of Arab art. In the early twentieth century, the Coptic Museum was founded.

The Comité created a collection of Arab art that was first housed in the mosque of al-Ḥākim and then moved to the newly designed building where it still resides. The collection was composed of structural parts and architectural elements taken from the monuments on which the Comité worked. Columns, woodwork, marble revetments and mosaic works were of special interest to the Comité and these elements remain a significant portion of the collection.[10] Later additions included materials from excavations and

[6] The *Description* was not the first text to contain maps of Cairo. Piri Reis, in *Kitāb-i Baḥriye* mapped the whole of the urban area of Cairo including the area of the pyramids. His map dates to 962, 1554 and is most readily consulted in Nasser O. Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo* (Leiden, 1995), 213, fig. 29.

[7] The Comité continued in existence until the 1950s, although the major portion of its work was completed by 1935.

[8] For this phenomonon see Jean-Marcel Humbert, Michael Pantazzi and Christiane Ziegler, *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730–1930* (Ottawa, 1994).

[9] The deliberations of the Comité were published annually in French (and some years were translated into Arabic) as *Exercise* followed by the year, beginning with 1882.

[10] *Exercise 1889*, 6th part, no. 34, March 19, 1889 (Cairo, 1890), 13–31; Hassan Hawary and Hussein Rached. *Catalogue Général du Musée Arabe du Caire: Stèles*

objects from individual donors. In the early twentieth century, when the Coptic collection was established, judgments were made about what objects belonged to each classification – Arab, Coptic and Egyptian – and moved among the museums accordingly.[11] The Comité considered the illustrated catalogue of the Arab art collection as fundamentally a portable museum space which made the objects and their order in the museum known and available to audiences beyond museum visitors.[12]

In addition, the Comité adopted a mutli-faceted strategy in specific sections of Cairo to create a living museum. The targeted areas were primarily the main spine of Cairo in the Fāṭimid period, on the streets of *al-Shāri' al-Aʿẓam* (today called *al-Shāriʿa Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh*) and *al-Darb al-Aḥmar*, especially those portions closer to the Bāb Zūwayla and in the area of the complex of Sultan Ḥasan. On both streets they created a vista lined by facades of major buildings, not unlike the then current European designs for city streets. Small wooden shops which abutted the front of major buildings were demolished by the Comité because they hid the facades of the medieval buildings, although ample evidence indicated that the presence of such stores had been a planned part of the street design. Likewise, striped paintwork on the surfaces of major buildings in these areas, a practice begun in the sixteenth century with the Ottoman period, was removed. However, some minarets retain even now the checkered appearance which resulted from continual renewal of the paintwork, and many local shrines continue annually to have their striped painting renewed.

To accomplish so extensive a program of restoration, the Comité standardized by dynastic period missing architectural elements, a procedure especially apparent on Mamlūk buildings. Such features as overhanging awnings, railings, ceilings, and window treatments were prefabricated by the Comité and used throughout the city on all its restoration and rebuilding projects. Design motifs appropriate for each dynasty were established (Ṭūlūnid, Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid and Mamlūk) based on motifs then visible on extant parts of buildings and applied especially to the exteriors of buildings in these areas. Writing in Arabic on the interior of buildings was placed where evidence suggested that it might have been, and appropriate texts were selected for the many absent sections. Structures which were deemed important historically though they had fallen into disuse or were being used

Funéraires, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1932); Jean-David Weill, *Catalogue Général du Musée Arabe du Caire: Les Bois à l'Épigraphes jusqu'à l'Époque Mamlouke* (Cairo, 1931).

[11] How to distribute objects according to the newly perceived classifications was an ongoing discussion in the Comité meetings which began in the first year, 1882: *Exercise*, February 1, 1882, 22, where it is recorded that a resolution was approved that "Arab" objects in the Būlāq (or what is today the Egyptian) museum should be moved to the Museum of Arab Art.

[12] *Exercise* 34 (March 19, 1889) (Cairo, 1890, 20), 26–7.

for purposes different from their original ones were rebuilt. For example, the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn was an occupied ruin, and the mosque of al-Ḥākim had become a brick factory (see Plate 1). The Comité restored both, and only the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn was maintained as such. Often the rebuilding involved was considerable; for example, the portico facade and interior of the mosque of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i' was constructed anew. Vistas were created in strategic areas by repositioning buildings. Noteworthy is the *zāwīyā* of Faraj ibn Barqūq (1408), which the Comité moved a considerable distance south to its current position, in order to open up the area around Bāb Zuwayla. This living museum, created by the Comité's extensive endeavors, was composed of its newly conserved and rebuilt monuments prominent to the vision of a pedestrian walking the areas, and to the many travellers who recorded these monuments in drawings and photographs.[13]

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the impact of British scholarship altered the basic assumption about Egyptian cities, especially Cairo. The work of the British architect and engineer K. A. C. Creswell who became a member of the Comité, was especially influential. Scholars associated with the *Description* and members of the Comité in the nineteenth century worked from the basic assumption that the Egyptian urban built environment was modern and Arab. To them modern Arab cities were composed of newly erected structures, existing structures of varying ages which were in social use, and ruins, those structures abandoned or fallen out of social use. In contrast, Creswell's perspective, expressed in his two-volume work, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, and that of the Comité in the first three decades of the twentieth century, was that certain buildings and areas of Egypt's cities were medieval and Islamic.[14]

During the early decades of the twentieth century, scholars sponsored by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York produced the fundamental study of medieval Coptic visual culture, an analogue to Creswell's study of Muslim architecture.[15] They studied the monasteries of the Wādī Naṭrūn and published measured plans, elevations, and photographs of the interiors and

[13] The minaret of the Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn mosque was maintained by the Comité as a vista opportunity, and an additional admission fee was charged to ascend it. Scholarly lectures about the main monuments were advertised in the main tourist hotels and held in the mosque of al-Ḥākim and, later, in the Museum of Arab Art, now called the Museum of Islamic Art. *Exercise*, 1890, 78th rapport, 41–2.

[14] *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford, 1952 and 1959; reissued New York, 1978). K. A. C. Creswell, "A Brief Chronology of the Muhammadan Monuments of Egypt to 1517," *BIFAO*, XVI (1919), 39–164.

[15] Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi'n Natrūn*, part 3: *The Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. Walter Hauser (New York, 1936); see also *Part 1: New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius* (1926); *Part 2: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and Scetis* (1932).

exteriors of the Coptic monasteries. Studies of the buildings used by other sectarian groups such as the synagogues in Fusṭāṭ and Armenian practices in Cairo and Alexandria were made in the late twentieth century.[16]

In addition to being expressed in buildings and objects and in the drawings and photographs of them, Egypt's visual culture is revealed to us through written descriptions. From the medieval period, visitors such as Nasir-e Khosrow in the eleventh century and Ibn Khaldūn in the fifteenth have left compelling verbal descriptions of Egypt's cities, especially of Cairo, and of its buildings, textiles and ceramic displays. Many of these accounts of urban culture are comparative, enabling us to assess the cities of Egypt in the Middle Ages in relation to other places. Scholars from the Mamlūk period, notably Ibn Duqmāq and Maqrīzī, wrote detailed descriptive histories of the whole urban area now called Cairo.[17] Maqrīzī's history in particular laid the chronological foundation for subsequent studies, and provided the basic topological framework for studying the city by *khiṭaṭ* (urban quarter), a framework largely followed here.[18] The major nineteenth-century historical study of the urban area of Cairo by 'Alī Bāshā Mubārak continued Maqrīzī's topographical analysis and brought the study of the city up to the contemporary period.[19]

Medieval sources not consciously written to convey a history or description of the urban areas, or of visual culture in general, nevertheless also contribute substantially to our knowledge. Military manuals, for example, not only describe the introduction of new war machinery such as the counter-weighted turbochet, but in so doing indicate the reason why significant changes in the height and thickness of citadel walls became necessary. In the same vein, the documentary Geniza, that is, "papers thrown away" – letters, bills of sale and contracts – is an exceptionally rich source of information for the visual culture of medieval Egypt.[20] Wide-

[16] Phyllis Lambert ed., *Fortifications and the Synagogue: The Fortress of Babylon and the Ben Ezra Synagogue, Cairo* (London, 1994). For Armenian practices, see Nairy Hampikian, *Armenian Presence in Cairo and Alexandria* (forthcoming).

[17] Ibn Duqmāq, Ibrāhim ibn Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-intiṣār li-wāsiṭat 'iqd al-amṣār* (*Description de l'Égypte*), vols. 4,5, ed. Karl Vollers, 1893. Reprint, Beirut, n.d. al-Maqrīzī, Taqi al-Dīn. *Itti'āẓ al-ḥunafa'bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-fāṭimiyyūn al-khulāfa'*, vol. 1, ed. Jamal al-din al-Shayyal (Cairo, 1967), vols. 2,3, ed. M. Hilmi and M. Ahmad (Cairo, 1971–73); Al-Maqrīzī, Taqī al-dīn.*Kitāb al-mawā'iẓ wa'l-i-'tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-athār*. 2 vols. (Bulaq, 1853; reprint, Beirut, n.d.); Sylvie Denoix, *Décrire le Caire: Fusṭāṭ-Miṣr d'après Ibn Duqmāq et Maqrīzī*. (Cairo, 1992).

[18] For the intellectual heritage of writing about Cairo see Nasser Rabbat, "Writing the history of Islamic Architecture in Cairo," *Design Book Review*, 31(XXX):48–51. For a comparison of Maqrīzī and Ibn Duqmāq's vision of Cairo see Denoix, *Décrire le Caire.*

[19] 'Alī Bāshā Mubārak, *al-khiṭaṭ al-jadīda al-tawfīqiyya li-miṣr wa'l-qāhira*, 20 vols. (Cairo, 1882).

[20] S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 6 vols. (Berkeley, 1967–94). The quotation is from vol. 1, *Economic Foundations*, 7.

ranging information about the material culture of daily life of those members of medieval society able to participate in buying and trading goods comes alive in its fragments and in the many analyses of those fragments. Representing a period from roughly the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, the documents provide especially abundant evidence of the practices of the Jewish communities.

The visual culture of Egypt from 640 to 1517 is reconstructed here from two different perspectives: historical change and dynastic change. Each identifies different types of evidence. Each also relates to the very different interests that led contemporary inquirers to want to know the visual world of those centuries. Historical change emphasizes the social function of the visual world. Buildings, objects, writing practices, processions – all the visual expressions of a society – are considered in relation to the social, political, economic and religious changes in society. From this perspective, the nine centuries covered here from the coming of the Muslim armies in 640 to the Ottoman conquest in 1517, can be divided roughly in half at the date of 1075.

The second perspective divides the 900 years by periods of dynastic rule, beginning with the Ṭūlūnids in 868 and ending with the close of Mamlūk rule in 1517. This approach emphasizes specific signs, symbols, and materials, what is often called style, as related to political rule. Both the categories, historical and dynastic, are used in contemporary reconstructions of the past and are not directly related to categories people living during those times would have used to frame their understanding of the visual world. Nevertheless, the focus here on cities, buildings and institutions, as a separate category from elements of luxury, relates directly to a division of the visual world found in many medieval texts.

The first historical period, 640–1075

During the first period, from 640, when the Muslim armies conquered Egypt, to 1075, when Badr al-Jamālī was appointed *wazīr* to the Fāṭimid caliph, the population of Egypt had become predominantly Muslim, even though significant Christian and Jewish minorities remained.[21] With this political change buildings and spaces for Muslim communal practice came to dominate the central core of cities. The Muslim calendar organized the year, and arts associated with Muslim practices, such as providing the *kiswa* – the covering for the Ka'ba in Mecca – for the annual *ḥajj*, as well as

[21] R. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period, An Essay in Quantative History*. (Cambridge and London, 1979); Michael Morony, "The Age of Conversions: A Reassessment," and G. Anawati, "Arabization and Islamization," in Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity, Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*. Papers in Medieval Studies 9 (Toronto, 1990); P. du Bourguet, *Les Copts* (Paris, 1988).

preparation for the annual pilgrimage itself, played a role in the public life of the capital as well as many other Egyptian cities.

A language change throughout Egypt is linked to this conversion and to Muslim rule. By the end of this first period Arabic had become the dominant spoken language in Egypt. The acquisition of social status required command of the grammar and vocabulary for reading, writing and speaking proper Arabic. Among the Jewish and Coptic Christian communities, variants of Arabic also came into use, namely Judeo-Arabic, Arabic language written in Hebrew characters, and Copto-Arabic using the Coptic alphabet. While these variants existed only in the practices of these two communities, by the end of the first period Arabic inscriptions in Arabic characters came to be displayed throughout Egypt on buildings, objects, tombstones, textiles, and books of all the communities.[22]

Furthermore, by the end of this early period writing in Arabic came to be used as a public art form. Writing appeared on the outside of mosques, on textiles, and on banners and clothing used in official processions in the public areas. In the early years Arabic, beyond its use in books and official and unofficial written documents, was used only in the interior of Muslim communal spaces, in ways that Coptic, Greek and Hebrew were used in the structures of those communities, namely to mark those spaces and objects in them with the language and alphabet of the community. Change in the traditional practice of using writing mainly on the interior of sectarian communal spaces appeared in the practices of the Ismāʿīlī ruling group, the Fāṭimids. In the late tenth century they placed writing on the minarets and portal of the mosque of al-Ḥākim located outside the Ismāʿīlī royal city of al-Qāhira at its formal entrance portal, the Bāb al-Futūḥ. The writing on the exterior of this mosque displayed a message based predominantly in the Qur'ān and addressed to Muslims. To us today, this use of Arabic appears to have been part of the social and religious dialogue taking place between Muslim groups, namely between the ruling Shīʿī Ismāʿīlī Fāṭimids and the majority of the population who were *Sunnī* Muslims. Such an understanding is supported by the use of writing in Arabic on official clothing, banners, the saddle blankets of mounts used in the official Fāṭimid processions in the late tenth and eleventh centuries which took place on days of importance in the Muslim calendar, especially days important to Ismāʿīlī observance, and on days important in Egypt, such as the opening of the Nile canal.[23]

While in this early period, Arabic inscriptions replaced those in Coptic as one form among many motifs for display on textiles and on pottery, by the late ninth and early tenth centuries writing displaying phrases or parts of

[22] Irene A. Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fāṭimid Public Text* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998).
[23] Ibid., ch. 3.

phrases from the Qur'ān as well as other words conveying an Islamic sensibility began to appear. On pottery, for example, the words *tawakkul taqwā* (Trust [in God]), *kāmila* (Perfect), *shāmila* (Complete) are designs painted on the surface. Writing in Arabic bearing generalized good wishes, such as *surūr* (joy) and *yumm* (good fortune), also appeared on pottery. Whether the audience for these objects was a general urban audience or whether the specific phrases made them appeal to one group rather than another is not clear.[24]

When the Muslim armies came to Egypt in 641, Egypt's major cities were configured according to their Roman military origin. Alexandria, for example, then the largest city in Egypt, represented a Seleucid variant of the ubiquitous Greco-Roman grid plan, and Babylon and Luxor were sites of Roman fortifications. The new city founded by the commander of the Muslim armies, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, was also built for military purposes, as its name, Fusṭāṭ (the tent), suggests, but its construction brought a new mode of urban organization to Egypt. The urban fabric of the new city was a network of *khiṭaṭ* (sing *khiṭṭa*, delimited areas, or, urban quarters) linked together by streets of varying size. A *khiṭṭa* was allotted to a group of soldiers usually related by tribe. The principal focal buildings of Fusṭāṭ were the *jāmi'* or Friday mosque, the *dār al-imāra* (house of the commander, lit. "of the princes") and an open area, *raḥbah* or *maydān*, although each neighborhood also had its own Muslim communal space.[25]

What remained of the Roman fortress of Babylon became a Christian and Jewish enclave within greater Fusṭāṭ. The interior of the northernmost tower became part of the Greek Orthodox church of St. George. The Mu'allaqa (the hanging) church of the Coptic community was suspended over the fortress gate. The Coptic churches of Abū Sargah and St. Barbara and two synagogues, the Palestinian and the Babylonian, were built within the

[24] Helen Philon, *Early Islamic: Ceramics Ninth to Late Twelfth Centuries* (Athens, 1980); Geza Fehervari, *Islamic Pottery* (London, 1973); Arthur Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery* (London, 1947). M. Jenkins, "Muslim: An Early Fāṭimid Ceramist," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (May 1968), 359–69; M. Jenkins, "Sa'd: Content and Context," in Priscilla P. Soucek (ed.), *Content and Context of the Visual Arts in the Islamic World* (Philadelphia and London, 1988); 359–69.

[25] K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 2 vols., 3 parts (Oxford, 1932–40; revised 1969; reprint, New York, 1979), 1, pt.1, 35–40, 149–51; Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, revised and supplemented by James W. Allen (Aldershot, 1989), ch. 14 for the mosque of 'Amr; Roland-Pierre Gayraud, "Istabl 'Antar (Fostat) 1990. Rapport de fouilles," *Annales Islamologiques*, 27 (1993), 230, figs. 12 and 13 for evidence of the city; André Raymond, *Le Caire* (Paris, 1993); Janet Abu-Lughod, *Cairo* (Princeton, 1971). *Raḥbah* and *maydān* do not appear in the medieval Arabic sources to be exactly interchangeable terms for "open area " or "square," although it is hard to judge the use of these terms over time. In Egypt, at least in the Mamlūk period, *maydān* seems to indicate an open area framed by buildings, and *raḥbah* an open area with less clearly defined boundaries.

fortress. This area changed over time from an enclave of minorities to one which, after 1075, i.e., in the second historical period, supported some eighteen mosques and a substantial integrated Muslim community.[26]

In 758, al-'Askar, a new *khiṭṭa*, was established to accommodate the military sent by the 'Abbāsid caliphs to administer Egypt. Located north of Fusṭāṭ, this new *khiṭṭa* elongated the urban fabric of the capital. Its focal elements were again a newly built Friday mosque, a *dār al-imāra* for the new governor, and a square. Some 100 years later, in 868, the 'Abbāsid general, Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, built a new *khiṭṭa* further north of Fusṭāṭ and east of al-'Askar, on the rising ground toward the Muqaṭṭam hills and just south of the *Birkat* (pool) *al-Fīl*. There was an increase in significant elements in this new center of rule, known as al-Qaṭā'i', and some changes were made in the way the old types were used.[27]

Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn built not only the customary mosque with a *dār al-imāra* (see Plate 2), he also built a palace with a large *maydān* and eight gateways. By these actions he changed the traditional function of the *dār al-imāra* from a palace where the governor lived to a space where governors performed ablutions after coming from the palace residence to the mosque. From the *dār al-imāra* in al-Qaṭā'i', Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn and subsequent governors entered the *maqṣūra* (reserved) section of the mosque at the *miḥrāb* area.[28] This change foreshadowed the elimination of the *dār al-imāra* as a functioning unit in the ruling center which occurred in the next expansion of the city.[29]

The many gated streets leading from the palace into the *maydān*, themselves new additions to urban forms in Fusṭāṭ, were used as processional routes to other locations in the capital. The processions were apparently a new form of ruling display in the capital area. One route, known as The Great Street (*al-Shāri'a al-A'ẓam*), led from the palace to the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn and was decorated with lions made of stucco. The name, The Great Street, as well as its destination, the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, continued into the Fāṭimid period (969–1171), when it was used to designate the route from the center of Fāṭimid rule to the mosque.[30] Other new institutions and support systems were built in this area of the capital, such as a hospital for civilians and botanical and zoological gardens, while older systems were expanded, namely the aqueduct system to the new

[26] Peter Sheehan, "The Roman Fortifications," in Lambert, *Fortifications and the Synagogue*, 51–59.

[27] Zaky Muhammad Hasan, *Les Tulunids: Étude de l'Égypte Musulmane à la fin du IXème siècle 868–905*. (Paris, 1933).

[28] Cresswell, *A Short Account*, ch. 20.

[29] Jere L. Bacharach, "Administrative Complexes, Palaces, and Citadels: Changes in the Loci of Muslim Rule," in Irene A. Bierman, Rifa'at A. Abou-El-Haj, and Donald Preziosi (eds.), *The Ottoman City and Its Parts* (New Rochelle, 1991), 111–28.

[30] Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fāṭimid Public Text*, ch., 4, 5.

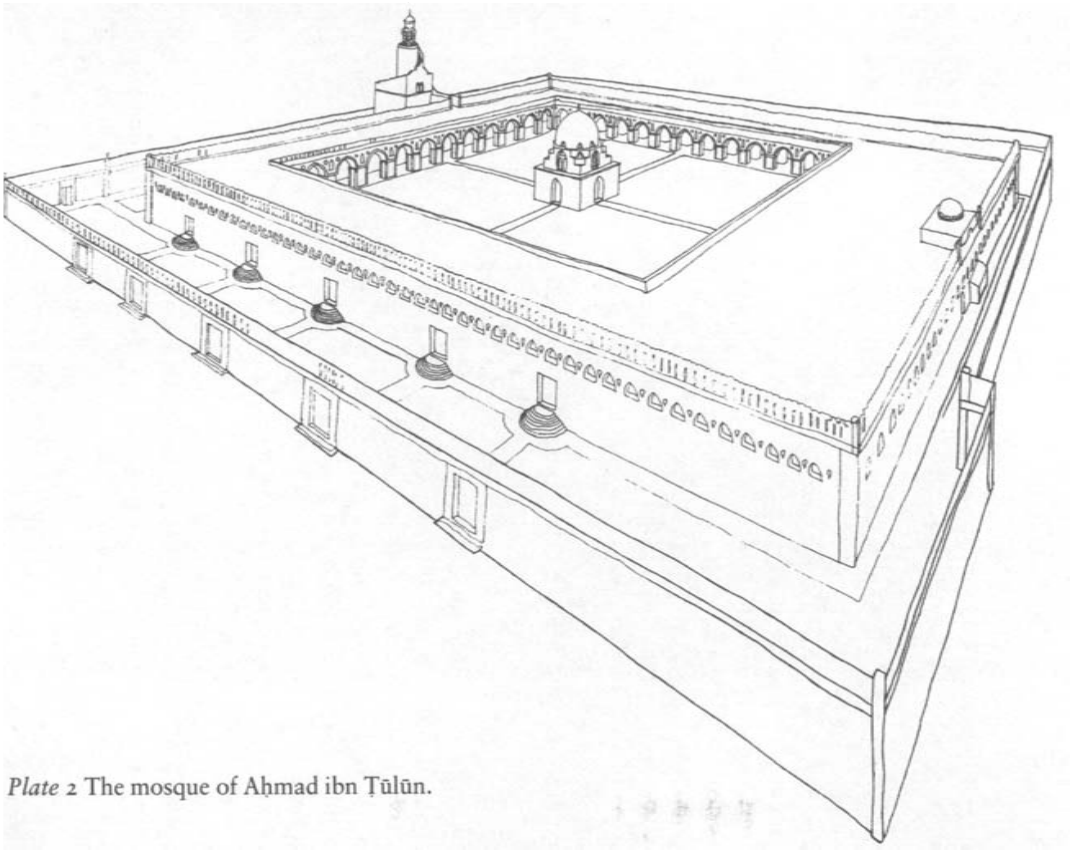

Plate 2 The mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn.

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area of building. All that remains of this center of rule is the Friday mosque, for the whole ruling enclave was razed in 905 by the general sent from Baghdād to reclaim Egypt from the far too independent Ṭūlūnids.

The next major addition to the capital city was al-Qāhira, built in 969 by Muslim armies coming to Egypt, this time from the west, from Ifrīqiya. Al-Qāhira ("the Victorious"), ultimately the name given to the whole city, anglicized as Cairo, was built still farther north of the population area. It shared many formal features with the earlier ruling quarters, but had both formal and functional differences. Like the earlier centers of rule, it had a Friday mosque, known as al-Azhar, and a square as focal centers, as well as a palace for the ruler, and eventually for the heir. However, this urban center was surrounded by a symbolic wall which signaled the distinctive quality of the ruler. He was the Ismā'īlī Imam as well as the caliph, the leader of the Ismā'īlīs who came with him from his former capital Sabra al-Manṣūriyya, and who formed a ruling Muslim minority within the larger Muslim majority. In this first period, al-Qāhira was a royal Ismā'īlī enclave, and al-Azhar functioned as the Friday mosque for Ismā'īlī Muslims, with the *adhān* (call to prayer), and prayer performed according to Ismā'īlī Shi'i prescriptions. Entrance to this royal enclave was restricted, with formal access through the northern gate, Bāb al-Futūḥ. In addition, outside the other northern gate, Bāb al-Naṣr, a *muṣalla* (open space for prayer) was constructed where Ismā'īlīs gathered on feast days, especially those celebrated in the Ismā'īlī Muslim calendar which augmented those observed by other Muslims. By the end of the tenth century, another Friday mosque, known as al-Ḥākim, was completed outside the Bāb al-Futūḥ. This Friday mosque rivaled that of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn in scale.[31]

Within al-Qāhira itself, the palace of the ruler was connected underground to the congregational mosque, al-Azhar, and to the palace of the heir across the main street, by tunnels that have recently been found, so that in the royal enclave the Ismā'īlī Imam was able to move within the city without being seen. The Fāṭimid rulers were buried in a special mausoleum within the palace itself, which prevented the general public from having access to the graves of the Ismā'īlī Imams.

The great Muslim cemetery, known as the Qarāfa, grew alongside the main inhabited area of Fusṭāṭ-Cairo as an extra-urban adjunct of the city. The Qarāfa was east of Fusṭāṭ, stretching northward ultimately beyond the northern boundary of al-Qāhira. The Qarāfa was more than simply a

[31] Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, I: 65–106; Jonathan Bloom, "The Mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo," *Muqarnas*, 1 (1983); 15–36. For alternate interpretations see Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City in Fāṭimid Cairo* (Albany, 1994) and Bierman, *Writing Signs*, ch. 3. Also, Shlomo D. Goitein, "Cairo: An Islamic City in the Light of the Geniza Documents," in Ira M. Lapidus (ed.), *Middle Eastern Cities* (Berkeley and Los Angles, 1969); 80–96. M. Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI2*, II, 850–62.

cemetery, it was an inhabited area. Its mosques, large and small, its tomb complexes, public baths and schools served as gathering places for both the residents of the capital and its own residents. This great cemetery complex always functioned for Muslims as an active adjunct to the city proper.[32] Jews and Christians were buried in cemeteries supported by their own communities within the confines of the city.[33] In addition, Coptic Christians supported cultic centers for martyrs in the deserts, such as that of St. Menas at Mareotis in the western desert near Alexandria.

Burial practices of each religious group were varied. Christians were buried in clothing, a practice made known to us through excavations. At least some Jews were buried in new clothing, a practice suggested by the letters of intent recorded in the documentary Geniza. Muslims, on the other hand, were buried in linen shrouds with inscription bands on one end which were wrapped around the head and eyes. The ends of these shrouds, known as *ṭirāz* textiles, are now located in museum collections world-wide. Variations in this practice have been made known to us by excavations early in the twentieth century. Other work indicated that Ismā'īlī practice required the use of three shrouds rather than one.[34]

During the period in which Cairo was undergoing the changes discussed above, transformations were also under way in Egypt's already existing cities. According to tradition, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ sponsored the construction of Friday mosques in the urban cores of Aswān, Qūṣ, Dishna, Bilbeis and Alexandria. In each of these cities, as in Fusṭāṭ, only the site itself remains to indicate the location of the early structures, as over the centuries each mosque has been reconstructed and enlarged many times and houses and palaces have been built over. In Aswān, as in Fusṭāṭ, a Muslim cemetery area existed outside the city. In the cemeteries of both these cities structures with nine domes have been found, suggesting that both citys' cemeteries were used by the Muslim population in similar fashion.

Although mosques, churches and synagogues are mentioned in written sources, few buildings remain from this early period. Those that do have

[32] Christopher Schurman Taylor, "The Cult of the Saints in late Medieval Egypt," (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1989); Jonathan Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo," *Muqarnas* 4 (1987), 7–20; James Dickie, "Allah and Eternity: Mosques, Madrasas and Tombs," in G. Mitchell (ed.), *Architecture of the Islamic World, Its History and Social Meaning* (London, 1978), 15–47.

[33] Peter Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture in Late Roman Africa," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 58 (1968), 85–95.

[34] Roland-Pierre Gayraud, "Istabl 'Antar 1994," *AI*, 29 (1995), 2–24; Sokoly, "Between Life and Death," 71–78. For Jewish practice in the Geniza material, see the many entries under "deathbed declarations" in S. D. Goitein and Paula Sanders, *A Mediterranean Society: Cumulative Indices* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993). The work of Kendrick in the early twentieth century has been of especial value in understanding Christian practices and variations in Muslim practice.

undergone significant structural changes over the centuries.[35] Yet some general remarks can be made about building practices in this first period. Initially, building materials were mud-brick and plaster with wooden beams (palm or sycamore) laid horizontally in the walls to increase the stability of the building by distributing the weight and enlarging the base of movement. This technique continued into the second period (see Plate 3), and beyond into building practices today. The predominance of such non-durable high-maintenance building materials helps to explain why so little remains from the early centuries of this period. In the tenth century, new materials begin to appear. Stone was used for facing, such as in the mosque of al-Ḥākim, and fired brick with plaster mortar was used for walls. Only the foundations of the Abū Sargah (St. Sergius), St. Barbara and al-Muʿallaqa churches in Fusṭāṭ date from this period and all reveal basilica plans, an adherence to the building practices then current for all rites of Christian churches in Egypt. The foundations of the synagogues date from a later period, although their existence in this period is affirmed by written sources.[36]

At least three different mosque building types existed in this early period, each of which appears to have served a specific function. Friday mosques, whether large like those of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn (Plate 2) or of al-Ḥākim (Plate 1), or small like al-Azhar or the mosque of ʿAmru in Qūṣ, all adhere to a similar spatial arrangement. An outer wall encloses both an open space (*ṣaḥn*) and a roofed area (*ḥaram*, secluded area, or *bayt al-ṣalāt*, house of prayer) on the *qibla* side. Covered porticoes *(riwāq)* usually run along the three other interior sides.[37] The entire building is oriented toward the Kaʿba in Mecca, and the *miḥrāb* (niche) indicating that orientation was in the center of the wall facing the *qibla*. In addition, one other type of prayer space for Muslims, a *musalla*, was delineated and in use in the capital from 969–1171.

The Friday mosque served as the gathering place for Muslims for the Friday mid-day prayer where the *khuṭba* (sermon) was delivered. The *khuṭba* was delivered by the leader of the congregation who sat on the top step of the *minbar* (stepped pulpit) facing the congregation. Each of these mosques had a *minbar* constructed of wood. New *minbar*s were often donated to mosques as pious acts by rulers or members of the ruling family. No *minbar* from this early period in Egypt is extant, but many exist from the second period (see Plate 4). Medieval texts supply what is known about the

[35] For the synagogues see: Charles Le Quesne, "The Synagogue," in Lambert, *Fortifications and the Synagogue*, 79–100.

[36] Abū Ṣāliḥ l'Armenien, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, ed. and trans. B. T. A. Evetts (London, 1895); De Lacy O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt* (Amsterdam, 1937).

[37] Dogan Kuban, "The Central Arab Lands," in Martin Frishman and Hassan-Uddin Khan (eds.), *The Mosque* (London, 1994), 77–100.

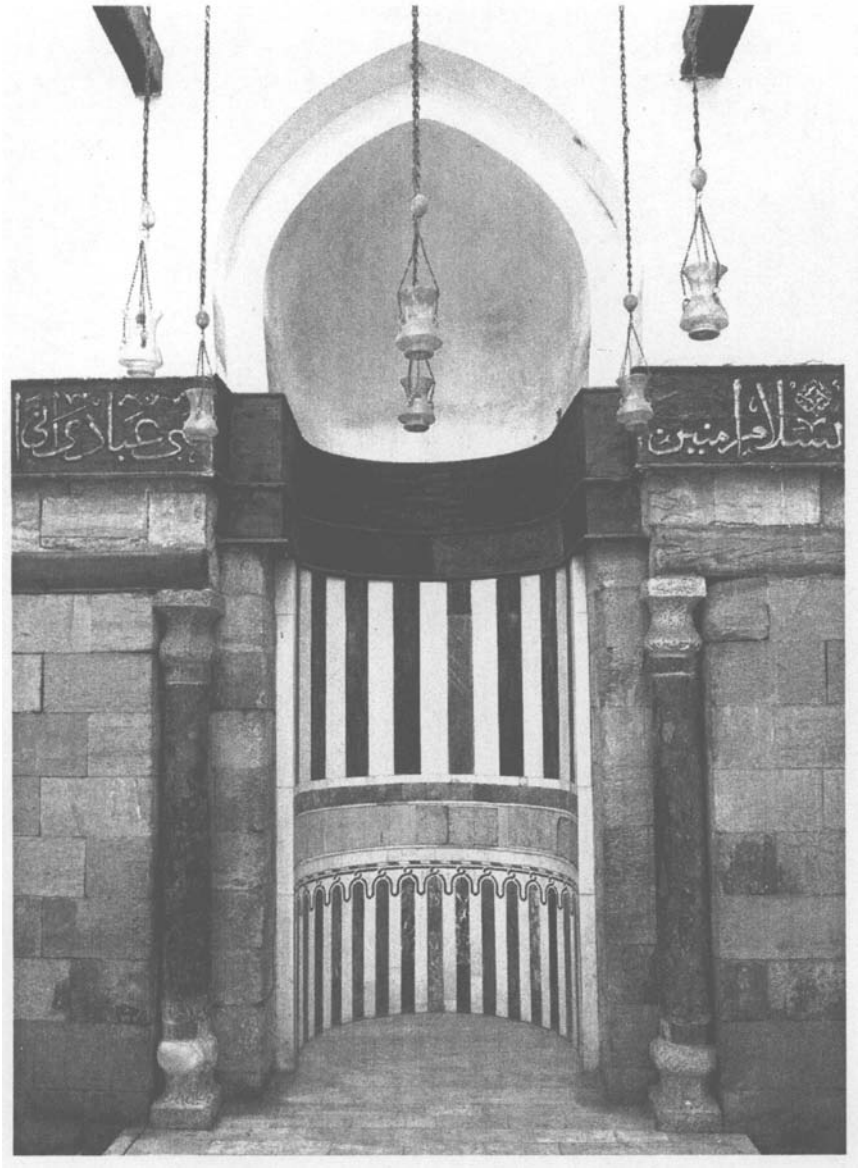

Plate 3 The *miḥrāb* area in the mausoleum of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb.

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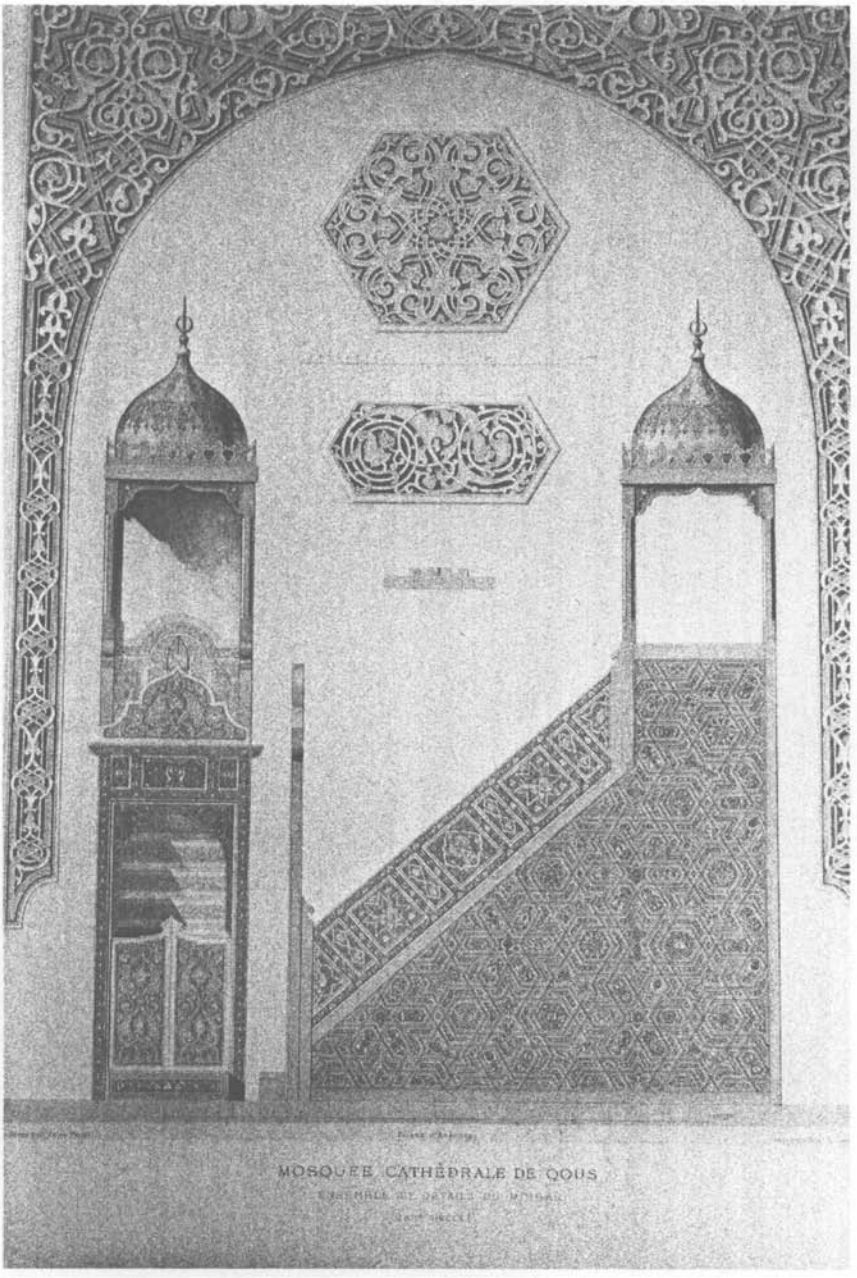

Plate 4 The *minbar* given to the Friday mosque in Qūṣ by the Fāṭimid *wazīr* al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i'.

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formal aspects of the *minbar* in this first period, namely that all of them shared the common feature of five steps leading to the topmost, where the Imām sat facing the congregation. In addition, at least by the ninth century, Friday mosques had one minaret. An exception to this practice was the mosque of al-Ḥākim which had two minarets; communal prayer spaces, since they were not constructed to serve as Friday mosques, had none.

Friday mosques, with one exception, all share one building practice that bears special consideration. The roof of the covered areas and the porticoes of these mosques were supported by columns and capitals gathered as *spolia* from older buildings in the surrounding areas and reused on the interior. The conscious and systematic display of previously used columns and capitals in the Friday mosques was in keeping with the standard building practice in the Friday mosques in all the territories newly acquired by the Muslim armies. In Egypt this practice was continued longer than elsewhere, as the use of Coptic, Hellenistic and pharaonic columns in the Friday mosque of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad on the citadel (1318) attests. The one notable exception, the use of piers in the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, drew considerable negative attention from the Muslim community in its day.

The universal practice of using columns and capitals taken from other sectarian buildings and from ruins to support the roofs of Friday mosques, despite the many resultant structural problems, constitutes evidence for its significance to the Muslim community. The structural problems were obvious. Using columns and capitals gathered from different sites as weight-bearing members inside the Friday mosques forced the architects to devise schemes to compensate for the uneven heights of the columns and capitals and for their varying load bearing capacities. Employing load-bearing units that were uniform, such as piers or columns newly made to standard size and width, is a much more straightforward task.

Understanding the meaning of this practice is a more difficult task because the pattern of use constitutes a major part of the evidence. The practice of reserving the display of reused columns and capitals almost exclusively for the interior of Friday mosques rather than for other constructions suggests a very particular significance to the Muslim community over and above the mere display of spoils of war. It provides a visual emblem of the confirmation of Islam as God's final revelation, and of Muḥammad as the Seal of the Prophets.

The second form used for mosques, that is, what is called *masjid* and refers to communal space for daily prayers, is a walled enclosure totally covered by nine domes. The remains of two such mosques existed into the twentieth century and both appear to have been constructed in the tenth century. The remains of one, known as Ṭabāṭabā, still exist in the Qarāfa, and the other, known as *sab'a wa-sab'īn wālī* (seventy-seven governors), located in the cemetery of Aswān, was destroyed in the early twentieth

century. Although little is known about the specific function of these mosques at the time of their construction, their location in the cemetery suggests that they were related to funeral rites, and many mausolea were built adjacent to them. No evidence suggests that minarets were attached originally to these mosques.[38]

The mosque of Lu'lu'a is the only example extant of the third type of mosque, also a *masjid* or a space for daily prayer. It is a tower mosque with two small prayer spaces, one above the other (see Plate 5). The Lu'lu'a mosque built in 1015/16 by the Fāṭimid Imam al-Ḥākim is also located in the Qarāfa, which might suggest that it too served a funerary function. However, the spectacular view of the citadel in one direction and of the pyramids in Giza in another offered from its second storey, and especially from its roof, suggests that its form relates to the viewing opportunities of its site, rather than to funeral rituals. In fact, medieval histories report that *manẓara* with prayer spaces, that is, viewing places where prayer space was provided, were built in several locations throughout the greater capital area in the tenth century. Possibly Lu'lu'a is the surviving example of this type of communal prayer space.[39]

The prayer space known as a *muṣalla* is documented in the written record as existing outside the Bāb al-Naṣr of al-Qāhīra. It was a space delineated in a fashion not recorded, and was used for major occasions in the Muslim calendar when mosques were not adequate to accommodate the Muslim community from both the city itself and the rural areas. They came together to celebrate occasions in the Muslim calendar such as the Fridays in Ramaḍān or the two major feasts at the end of Ramaḍān or during the month of the *ḥajj*. This space apparently served the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī community's expanded observances of Muslim celebrations, such as for the birthdays of the Prophet Muhammad, Ḥusayn and 'Ali, and for the Ismā'īlī Imams.[40]

Visual culture in the second historical period, 1075–1517

In the second, or late, medieval period the visual arts in cities flourished in an unprecedented manner. This rapid expansion, which made Cairo into the *umm al-dunyā*, was supported by the dramatic changes in the system of supporting Muslim endowments. Revenues from cultivated land were regularly assigned to support pious endowments and the control of the system was centralized. The exact date when these changes were formalized

[38] Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, I, 11–18. Ugo Monneret de Villard, *La Necropoli Musulmana di Aswan* (Cairo, 1930).

[39] Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, I, 113–15.

[40] See Sanders, *Ritual, Politics*, where many references to the role of the *muṣalla* in Fāṭimid practice are discussed.

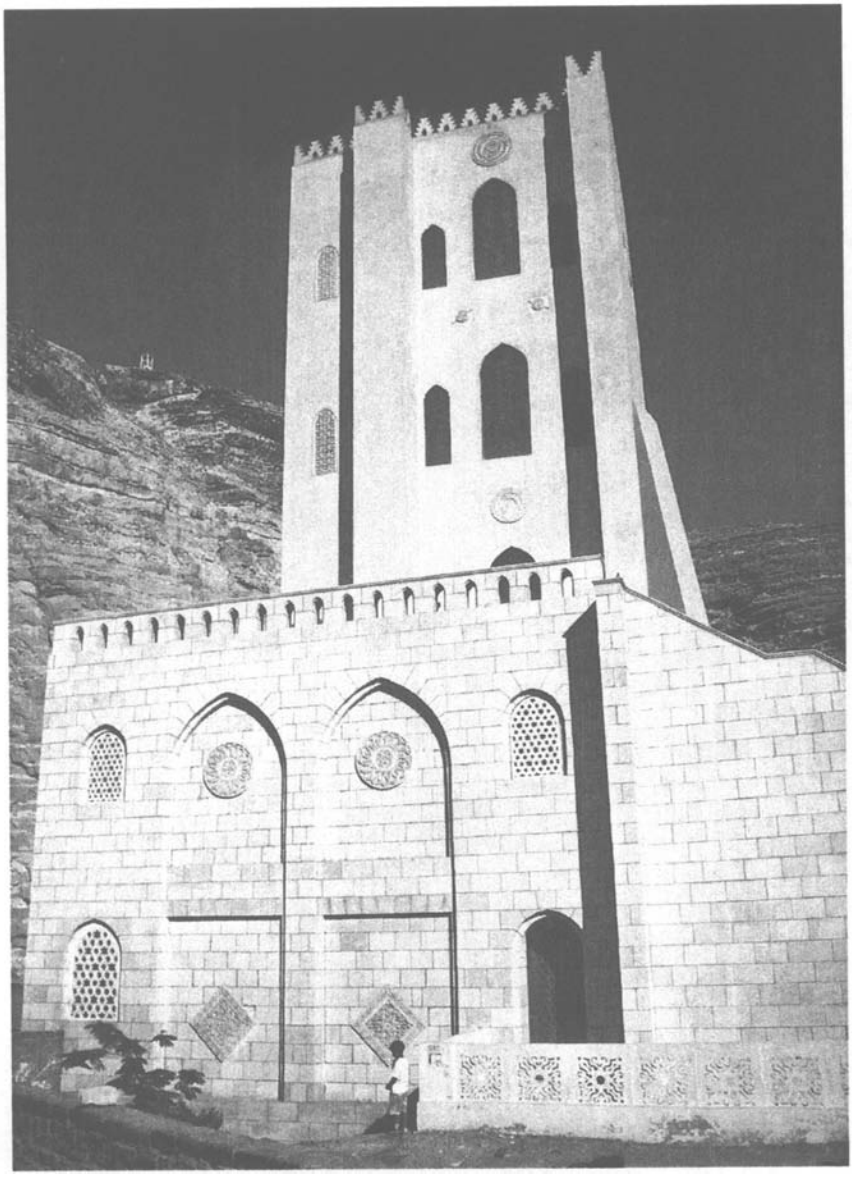

Plate 5 The Lu'lu'a mosque, Qarāfa

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is not yet identified clearly, but 1075 was chosen here to mark that date because Badr al-Jamālī became *wazīr* in that year. He and the *wazīrs* who followed him launched extensive building and reconstruction programs, which suggest that the centralized *waqf* system was in the process of being put in place, if it had not actually started. In the first period Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities each had pious foundations that supported charity, helped the poor and funded communal structures. However, the regularization and expansion of the *waqf* endowment system in the hands of the Muslim ruling groups put substantial funds in the service of supporting major Islamic institutional properties throughout Egypt.

This centralization of the *waqf* system and assigning revenues from cultivated land throughout the empire to support urban institutions, particularly those in the capital, made possible a marked expansion in the types, scale and numbers of buildings funded for the general good of the Muslim community. By the fourteenth century Cairo had become the most important university city in the Muslim world, the *umm al-dunyā* described by Ibn Khaldūn. Its streets were lined with institutions large and small, all dedicated to benevolent purposes including many whose usufruct was devoted to all or some of the descendants of the endowers. The extensive revenues for these endowments also supported those processes by which expensive, luxurious materials could be extracted from Egypt, such as quarrying marble and porphyry, and also the control necessary for long-distance trade in luxury materials, such as marble from Italy and lapis lazuli from the east. From the twelfth century onward, as Sunnī law schools came to dominate in Egypt, some families with daughters used the *waqf* system as a means of avoiding seizure of property, and accordingly buildings endowed by foundations founded by women increased markedly.[41]

When Ibn Khaldūn described Cairo as the epitome of sedentary culture, he was responding to the luxury displayed in buildings, in objects and in the lifestyle that he saw around him.[42] Egypt's many cities shared in this culture,

[41] For an analysis of the impact of the *waqf* system in Egypt and in particular in Cairo during this second period, Hassanein Rabie, "Some Financial Aspects of the Waqf System in Mamlūk Egypt," in *The Second International Conference on Urbanism in Islam (ICUIT)* (Tokyo, 1990), 1–24, and Carl F. Petry, "Class Solidarity versus Gender Gain: Women as Custodians of Property in Later Medieval Egypt," in Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History* (New Haven, 1991), 122–42. For descriptions of buildings through endowment records, see Leo A. Mayer, *The Buildings of Qaytbay as Described in His Endowment Deed* (London, 1938); M. M. Amin and Laila A. Ibrahim, *Architectural Terms in Mamluk Documents* (Cairo, 1990).

[42] J. A. Williams, "Urbanization and Monument Construction in Mamluk Cairo," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 33–45; K. Stowasser, "Manners and Customs at the Mamluk Court," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 13–20. R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of Mamluk Architecture in Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *SI*, 35 (1972), 69–119; Laila 'Ali Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 47–59; Laila 'Ali Ibrahim and J. M. Rogers, "The Great Hanqah of the Emir Qawsun in

as did Egyptians of all religious groups, according to their ability to support a luxurious lifestyle. The building culture in this second period encompassed more choice in building materials and in materials used for ornamentation, and also in the manner in which these materials were used. Stone became a major construction material. In the late eleventh century, when the area of al-Qāhira was expanded, new defensive gates were constructed of pure stone. Stone was used as two-sided facing for walls, rather than one-sided as in the earlier period. Stone was also used as a rubble fill, and for alternating with courses of brick for the load-bearing walls of buildings. In all these constructions, wooden beams placed horizontally in the coursing of materials continued to assure the stability of buildings, as is shown on the wall of the mausoleum of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (see Plate 3). Building in stone, or in stone and brick, options available in this second period, enabled architects to construct taller buildings, and to experiment in new ways with vaulting, such as that in the mosque of Sultan Ḥasan.

At the same time it became easier to make more consistent use of decorative surfaces. Luxury materials came to be regularly available, and were thus used consistently in building. In the thirteenth century, beginning with the mausoleum of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (1250), marble was used for flooring and for lining the *miḥrāb*, a practice continued in ever more elaborate and varied patterns thereafter (see Plate 3).[43] Gold and glass mosaic was used on walls in communal structures and in palaces. Marble and semi-precious stone mosaic was used both in communal structures and palaces both on floors and on walls.

Elaborately carved wood was used as beams in palaces, for screens in churches, *minbar*s in mosques, and on the Holy Ark and pulpits in synagogues. Many of the motifs were shared by all of the communities in Egypt, but their social function varied by community. For example, in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, images of humans and of animals carved in wood were displayed on screens and on doors in churches where biblical scenes and the lives of saints were appropriate subjects (see Plate 6), and in palaces where courtly and literary scenes were common motifs. Such images were not displayed in mosques or synagogues. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, *minbar*s patterned from carved and assembled expensive woods and ivory were given to many Muslim institutions throughout Egypt.[44]

Cairo," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*, 30,1 (1974), 37–64.

[43] Nairy Hampikian, "Restoration of the Mausoleum of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb," in Jere L. Bacharach (ed.), *The Restoration and Conservation of Islamic Monuments in Egypt*, (Cairo, 1995), 46–59. German Institute of Archaeology; *Mausoleum of Sultan a-Saleh Nagm ad-Din Ayyub* (Cairo, 1993).

[44] Richard Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 650–1250* (New York, 1987), 188–208; Gawdat Gabra, *Cairo the Coptic Museum & Old Churches* (Dokki, 1993), esp. 96–101.

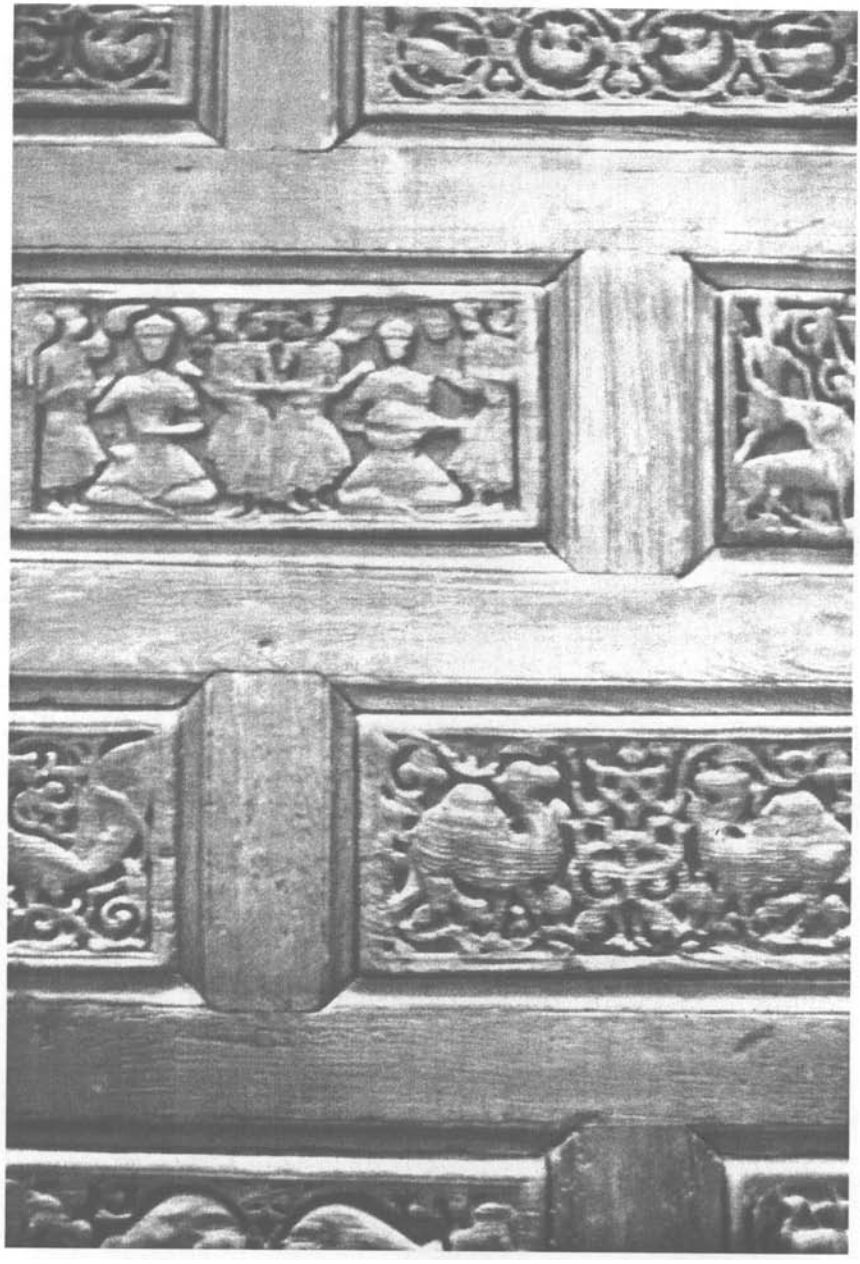

Plate 6 A Coptic screen (detail).

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Writing in Arabic carved in wood was displayed in mosques, in Hebrew in synagogues and in Coptic in churches of the Coptic community. From the thirteenth century on, a new technique was used on wood to create relief work.[45] A type of gesso was used to cover the surface of the wood, then shaped into letters and floral motifs and painted. This new relief technique almost entirely replaced carving, and is found in many of the Muslim communal structures of the second period. Indeed, wooden boards carved for use in older buildings were often reused by covering the carving with gesso relief work (see Plate 3).

The attention given to surface elaboration in building included details of metalwork devices used in construction. Hinges, braces on the corners of *tābūt*s (wooden cenotaph), metal grillwork, and locks were given elegant form and their surfaces elaborately worked. An outstanding example is the bronze medallion revetment on the doors of the mosque-*madrasa* of Sultan Ḥasan (constructed in 1356–59) (see Plate 7). The basic medallion silhouette was designed to stabilize and hold together the individual planks of wood from which the door was fashioned. However, not only was the silhouette of the medallion elegantly elaborated, its surface was pierced in an exquisite floral pattern that contributed to the aesthetic impact of the buildings.

Beyond the materials for building and elaborating the surfaces of structures, providing for the social use of structures was part of the building culture. In the case of communal structures, whether Muslim, Jewish or Christian, endowing the structure meant providing lamps and candelabras, holy books and book holders, basins, trays for serving residents, wall hangings, mats, and mattresses for sleeping. Thus, along with an expansion in options in construction practices, the arts of paper and book making, enameling glass and metalworking flourished.

The heightened concern for visual presentation was expressed in particular in making copies of the Qur'ān that were given to endowed institutions. Paper produced in Egypt in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and destined to be used for making copies of the Qur'ān or *waqfiyya* (pious endowment documents) was of exceptional quality. Likewise, the ways in which the calligraphy was executed on the page were elaborated. Not only black ink, but also gold ink and gold leaf were used for lettering and for illumination. Using gold leaf for writing involved a laborious process whereby glue rather than ink was the medium used for writing, and the gold leaf laid over the writing. Excess gold was then trimmed, leaving the letter

[45] For inscriptions: Arabic: Weill, *Les Bois à Épigraphes*. Caroline Williams, "The Qur'anic Inscriptions on the tābūt of al-Ḥusayn in Cairo," *Islamic Art* (1987), 3–26; Hebrew: Menahem Ben-Sasson, "The Medieval Period," in Lambert, *Fortifications and the Synagogue*, 219–23.

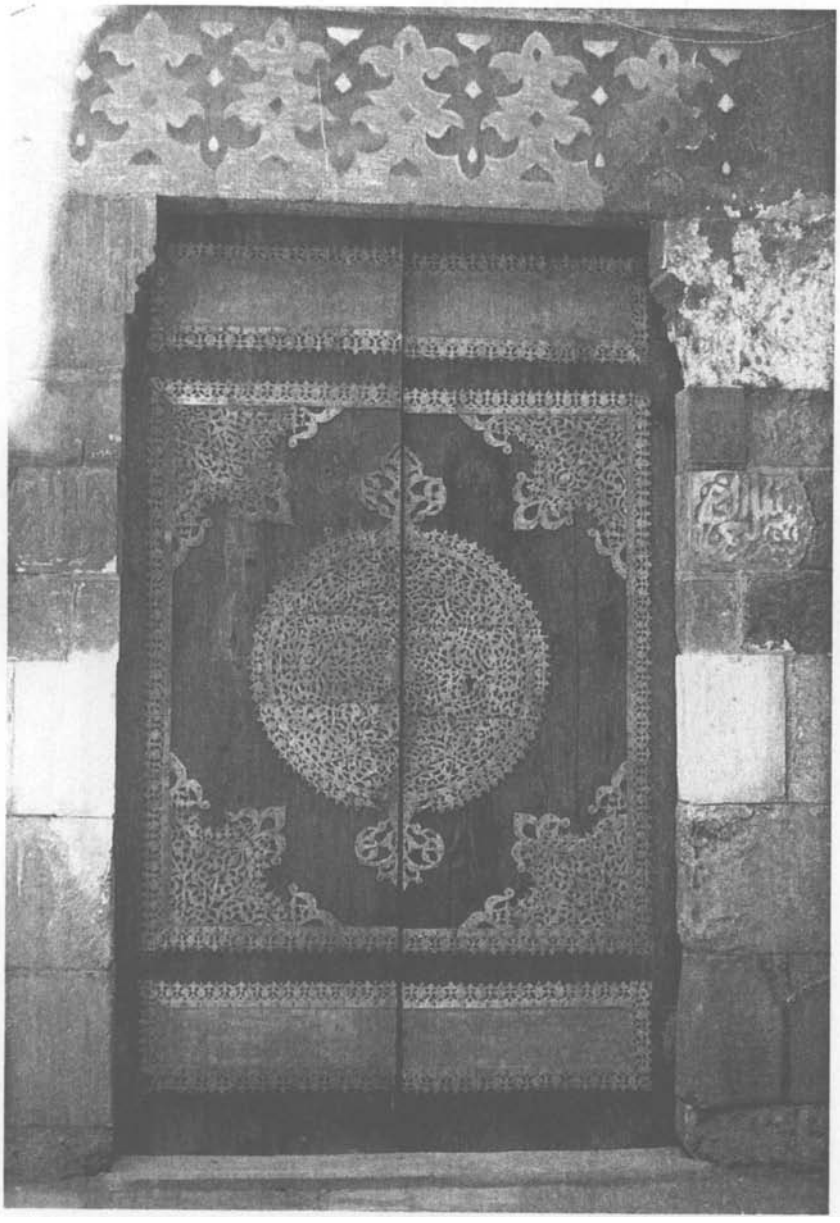

Plate 7 A metalwork door revetment from the mosque-*madrasa* of Sultan Ḥasan.

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shapes covered with gold leaf which were then outlined in black ink to enhance the visual impact of the writing. Gold, lapis lazuli and carnelian solutions or paints were used in headings and marginalia designs such as medallions and *shamsas* (suns or roundels). The Qur'āns fashioned from precious materials and finely processed and polished paper made for Mamlūk Sultan Sha'bān (1363–76) and his family are some of the finest illuminated copies ever produced (see Plate 8).[46]

In this second historical period all the cities in Egypt benefited from the expanded ability of pious foundations to fund multi-purpose institutional complexes. Members of the ruling group funded complexes outside the capital and made important gifts both to existing institutions and to newly founded ones. The most elaborate carved wooden minbar of the middle of the twelfth century is found in the Friday mosque of Qūṣ, a gift of the Fāṭimid *wazīr* al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i'.[47] Likewise, the Mamlūk Sultan Qāytbāy sponsored foundations in cities such as Fayyūm which were similar in form to the main building of his complex in the Qarāfa.

Ideas and designs traveled from the capital to other Egyptian cities, and they also traveled from other areas of Egypt to the capital. The mosque of the Fāṭimid *wazīr* al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i' built in 1160 outside the Bāb Zuwayla in Cairo with revenue-producing stores built underneath was patterned on a mosque in Upper Egypt.[48] Techniques, as well as structural elements, were brought to the capital from throughout the lands ruled from Cairo. Methods of working in stone were brought to Egypt with Badr al-Jamālī from Egypt's territories in Syria, and the Mamlūk Sultan al-Nāṣr Muḥammad brought the entrance portal used in the construction of his *madrasa*-mausoleum complex from a church in Acre after taking that city from the Latin crusaders.[49]

The shape of the capital city was changed both by the acts of rulers and by nature. Badr al-Jamālī began these changes by opening the royal city of al-Qāhira to residents from throughout the capital area, and by building up the streets linking the various urban areas, and by supporting restoration and rebuilding throughout the greater capital area. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the first Ayyūbid sultan, reinforced these changes by moving the location of the ruling center to the western half of the citadel, that part facing the urban

[46] David James *Qur'ans of the Mamlūks* (London, 1988), see esp. 182–97; David James, "Some Observations on the Calligrapher and Illuminators of the Qur'an of Rukn al-Din Baybars al-Jashangir," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 147–57.

[47] Ed. Pauty, "Le Minbar de Qus," in *Mélanges Maspéro III Orient Islamique* (Cairo, 1940), 41–53.

[48] Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, I, 275–88; Garcin, *Qus*, 88–89, 95.

[49] Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, II, for the details of the building. Lucy-Anne Hunt, "Churches of Old Cairo and Mosques of al-Qahira: A Case of Christian-Muslim Interchange," *Medieval Encounters*, 21(1996), 43–50.

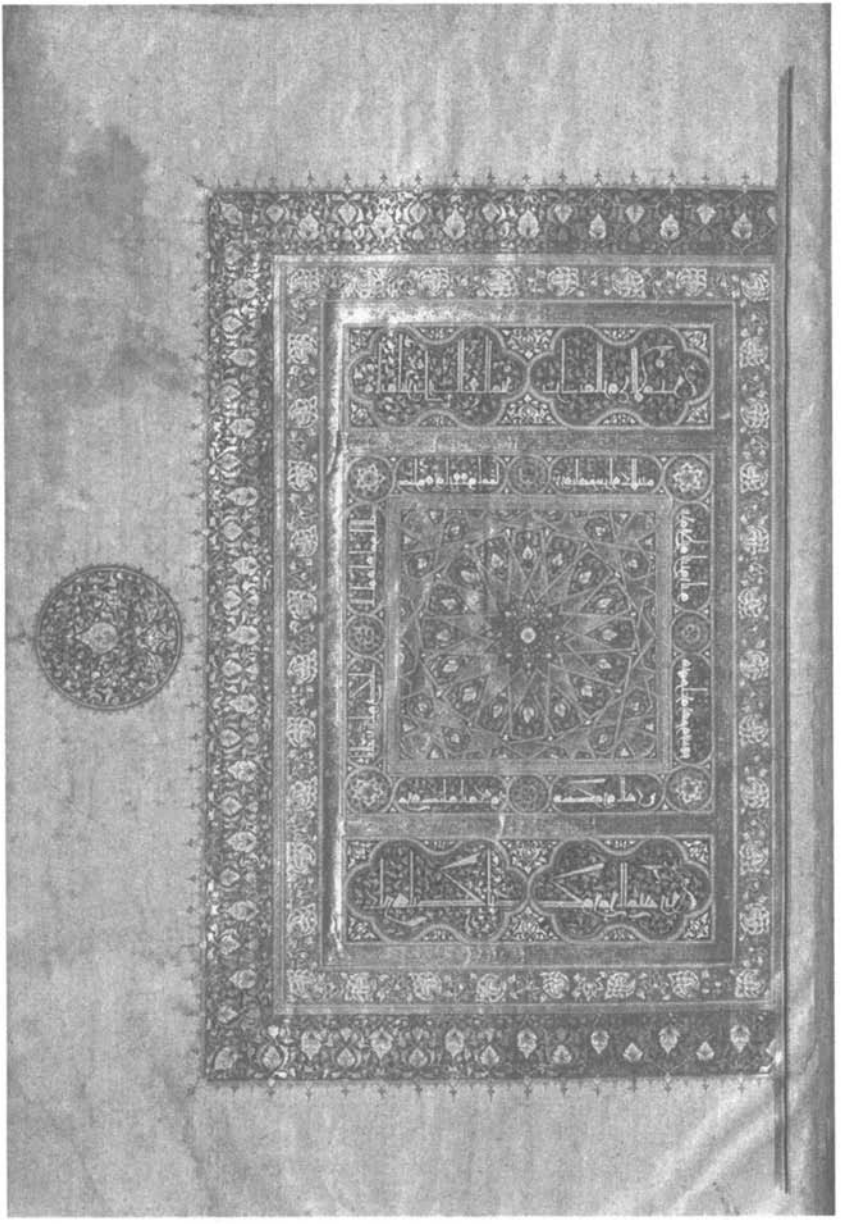

Plate 8 A page of the Qur'ān, from the reign of Sultan Sha'bān.

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population. The Mamlūk rulers continued to build up the area of the citadel.[50]

In addition, the city was shaped by changes in the course of the Nile in the late twelfth century . As a result of these shifts, the area known as Būlāq was permanently above the flood plain, and by the late thirteenth century had become the site of the river port and a bustling population.[51] The Mamlūk sultans encouraged their *amīr*s to build warehouses (*wākālas*) there to support an expanding domestic and international trade. The importance of these two new areas, Bulaq and the Citadel, fostered expansion on the streets linking them with the older urban areas. These changes were particularly noticeable on the *shāri'a al-darb al-aḥmar* which connected the Bāb Zūwayla area to the Citadel. The former center of rule, the palace area of the Fāṭimid city, became transformed into the site for major residential universities and tombs for the rulers.[52]

In a more programmatic way than in the earlier period, the city of Cairo was transformed on specific occasions by ritual processions which included members of the court, high ranking dignitaries and visitors.[53] Initially, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the processions celebrated events in the Muslim calendar as well as events important in the annual cycle of Egypt's economy, such as breaking the dam at the time of the Nile flood. They linked al-Qāhira with the older areas in the city. Not only were members of the processions richly dressed, but the streets along the processional route were elaborately hung with textiles.[54] After a hiatus in the late twelfth and

[50] Bierman, *Writing Signs*, ch. 4 and 5; Paula Sanders, "From Court Ceremony to Urban Language: Ceremonial in Fāṭimid Cairo and Fusṭāṭ," in C. E. Bosworth, Charles Issawi, Roger Savory and A. L. Udovitch (eds.), *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times*, (Princeton, 1989), 311–21; Rabbat, *Citadel of Cairo*; Neil D. MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo* (Cairo, 1992); Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the later Middle Ages*. (Princeton, 1981), esp. the appendices. Nezar Al Sayyad, "Bayn al-Qasrayn: The Street Between the Two Palaces," in Zeynap Celik, Diane Favro and Richard Ingersoll (eds.), *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994), 71–82; David Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamlūk Military Aristocracy," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, 2 (1968), 311–29.

[51] Nelly Hanna, *An Urban History of Būlāq in the Mamlūk and Ottoman Periods* (Cairo, 1983).

[52] Bierman, "Urban Memory," 2–4; Hampikian, "Restoration of the Mausoleum of al-Salih," 46–59.

[53] Sanders, *Ritual, Politics*. M. Canard, "La procession du nouvel an," *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales, Université d'Alger*, 13 (1955); K. Stowasser, "Manners and Customs at the Mamlūk Court"; Irene A. Bierman and Paula Sanders, *Writing Identity in Medieval Cairo* (Los Angeles, 1995).

[54] Louise W. Mackie, "Toward an Understanding of Mamlūk Silks: National and International Considerations," *Muqarnas*, 2(1984), 127–146; L. A. Mayer, *Mamlūk Costume: A Survey* (Geneva, 1952); D. Behrens-Abouseif, "The Citadel of Cairo," *AI*, 24(1988), 127–146.

thirteenth centuries, processions were revived by the Mamlūk sultans, but with a new route and with some new intentions. The route included the citadel area, the area outside the Bāb al-Naṣr, and the main spine of Cairo. On parade was the military might of the Mamlūk rulers and their amīrs.

Processions much smaller in scale took place regularly as a form of announcement of appointment to high office. Appointees would often proceed from Fusṭāṭ to either al-Qāhira or the Citadel dressed in fine clothing and mounted on richly appointed horses or donkeys, whichever was appropriate to the office.[55] A more local route was followed by the Coptic community in Fusṭāṭ when they made a candle-lit procession to the Nile at Easter. In cities outside the capital, processions were used to celebrate special days commemorating the lives of Muslim as well as Christian holy men and women.[56]

Communal structures

This is the period of expansion not only in number but in type and function of buildings for Muslim communal practice. In addition to the traditional Friday mosque form which continued to be built well into the fourteenth century, beginning in the thirteenth century *madrasa*s (universities), mosques, *khānqāh*s (lodges) and *māristān*s (hospitals) with iwans flanking a courtyard were constructed throughout the capital, in the Qarāfa, and in other Egyptian cities.[57] From the thirteenth century, patrons sponsored the building of complexes which combined areas for several different functions in one large structure with a single main entrance. Most of the larger complexes combined a *madrasa* or a *khānqāh* with the patron's mausoleum. In this manner tombs of Muslim patrons, often the ruler and the ruler's family and members of the government, came to be placed within the city proper, although a significant number of grand complexes were built in the Qarāfa.[58]

The minority communities in Egypt were able to support churches and synagogues and supply them with rich appointments, such as lamps, candelabra, wall hangings, rich fabrics, books and furniture. But by the late fourteenth century the general economy was severely weakened by many factors including the plague, affecting the whole population, and the ability

[55] Irene A. Bierman, "Inscribing the City: Fāṭimid Cairo," in *Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Aktuelle Probleme* (Riggisberg, 1997): 105–15.

[56] Abū Ṣāliḥ, *Churches and Monasteries*.

[57] Frishman and Khan, *The Mosque*, preface, 11–14.

[58] J. A. Williams, "Urbanization and Monument Construction," and J. A. Williams, " The Khanqah of Siryaqus; A Mamlūk Royal Religious Foundation," in *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism: Studies in Memory of Mohamed al-Nowaihi* (Cairo, 1984).

of the minority communities to afford the use of expensive materials was significantly curtailed.[59]

Visual culture by dynastic period

Understanding visual culture by focusing on ruling groups highlights those visual elements that each ruling group used to distinguish its practices from those of others existing in the cities of Egypt before them. Since artifacts are more ephemeral than major buildings, understanding arts by dynastic period often has meant looking at extant buildings or parts of them. These effects wrought by time on the visual arts appear to support the medieval assumption that cities and their buildings were the most important visual forms in medieval society.

What remains of the architecture of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn's ruling center, al-Qatā'i', is the Friday mosque (see Plate 2). Several elements of this mosque are unique in Egyptian architecture and relate directly to building practices at Sāmarrā, the capital of the 'Abbāsid empire from which Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn came. These external elements are a *ziyādah*, or an enclosing wall, which surrounded the mosque on all sides except the *qibla* side where the *dār al-imāra* had been built, and a minaret with its staircase partially spiraled on the outside. Internally, designs in the stuccoed walls, especially those carved in a beveled fashion which blurs the contrast between the foreground and background, relate to techniques used in the ornamenting of walls in Sāmarrā. This beveling technique was also used for designing in relief on wood, but it did not remain in use for long after the fall of the Ṭūlūnid rulers.[60]

What remains of the arts of the Ṭūlūnid period are made known to us primarily from excavations at Fusṭāṭ, not from the ruling quarter of al-Qatā'i'. Those excavations revealed a bath house with depictions of a seated figure and a dancer painted on the stucco-covered *muqarnaṣ*, motifs related to those current at Sāmarrā.[61] The excavations revealed also innumerable fragments of large-scale tapestries designed as hangings. These hangings were variously patterned, some with geometric motifs, some with animals such as lions and water buffalo rendered large in scale, and some with fish. Some also display inscriptions in Arabic. The number of these fragments suggests that a significant portion of the population in Fusṭāṭ was

[59] Donald Little,"Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Baḥrī Mamlūks," *BSOAS*, 39 (1976), 564–70; Le Quesne, "The Synagogue," 84–85. Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977).

[60] Ettinghausen and Grabar, *Art and Architecture*, 75–124.

[61] Laila 'Ali Ibrahim and 'Adil Yasin, "A Tulunid Hammam in Old Cairo," *Islamic Archaeological Studies: Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo*, 3 (1988), 35–78.

able to afford these fine furnishings.[62] These tapestries were undoubtedly produced in Egypt during the Ṭūlūnid period, but the excavations also reveal that the residents of Fusṭāṭ enjoyed textiles and weavings fashioned elsewhere. One knotted-pile carpet and fragments of several others have been discovered whose provenence is presumed to be areas further east.[63]

From the Fāṭimid period enough remains of their patronage as Ismāʿīlī Muslim rulers for us to suggest that certain motifs that appear on many of the buildings they sponsored were directly related to their Ismāʿīlī belief. The concentric circle motif appears either on the interior or exterior of most of their extant buildings. This relates directly to their concept of the relationship of Ismāʿīlīsm to the rest of Islam and of man to God and the universe. Often this motif was imbedded in a three-arched format elaborated by bands of writing, such as on the facade of the al-Aqmar mosque (see Plate 9). This format was used on the *qibla* walls of mausolea, on the surface of mosques, and on the *kiswa* (covering for the Kaʿba) the Fāṭimids sent to Mecca for the annual *ḥajj*.[64] In the later Fāṭimid period, monumental inscriptions on the outside of mosques in the city of al-Qāhira displayed the names and titles of the ruling *wazīr* along with that of the Fāṭimid ruler.[65]

Many architectural elements as well as objects and textiles remain from the Fāṭimid period that indicate a significant level of luxury in the arts. Elaborately carved wood was used by all groups of substantial means within Egyptian society (see Plates 4, 6). The wood, usually expensive and imported, was used to fashion doors for mosques, churches and synagogues as well as for palaces and homes of the wealthy. It was also used for furniture within communal structures, such as *minbar*s, portable *miḥrāb*s, Holy Arks, pulpits, and altar screens. Wood carving in the range of designs fashionable in the Fāṭimid period has been found in almost all parts of greater Cairo, in the desert monasteries, and in cities such as Qūṣ and Aswān, and even outside Egypt, in Mediterranean cities such as Palermo.[66]

In addition, luster ware ceramics remain in sufficient numbers to attest to the artistry of the Fāṭimid period. The platters, large bowls, plates and jugs

[62] I. Bierman, "Medieval Flatweaves in the Urban Middle East," in C. Cootner (ed.), *Flat Weaves, The Arthur D. Jenkins Collection* (Washington, DC, 1981), 161–67.

[63] The complete knotted-pile rug is in the collection of the San Francisco Museum, San Francisco, California. Fragments of knotted-pile rugs are in the collection of the Islamic Museum, Cairo. See also A. R. Fahmy, "The Earliest Islamic Rugs in Egypt," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts University of Cairo*, 22 (1960), 101–21.

[64] See Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, for the numerous mausolea and *mashhad*s displaying this motif. See also Bierman, *Writing Signs*, ch. 4.

[65] Bierman, *Writing Signs*, chs. 3 and 4; Sanders, *Ritual, Politics*; J. M. Bloom, "The Origins of Fāṭimid Art", *Muqarnas*, 3 (1985), 30–38; Bloom, "The Fāṭimids (909–1171), Their Ideology and Their Art," in *Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters:Aktuelle Probleme* (Riggisberg, 1997), 15–26.

[66] Gabra, *Cairo the Coptic Museum*; Francesco Gabriele and Umberto Scerrato, *Gli Arabi in Italia* (Milan, 1979), esp. nos. 196–99.

14

Culture and society during the late Middle Ages

JONATHAN P. BERKEY

As his name indicates, Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, an unprepossessing scholar of the fifteenth century, was a native of Jerusalem. In his youth, however, he moved to Egypt, where he studied with many of the leading traditionists and jurists of his day. Overwhelmed by the splendors of his adopted country, he wrote a treatise extolling its virtues and, in particular, comparing it favorably with his native Syria. Such compositions, celebrating the "wonders" (*faḍā'il*) of a city or region, were of course common in the later medieval Islamic world, and the inhabitants of Damascus or Medina could draw upon comparable works to bolster their civic pride. But Abū Ḥāmid had a strong case when he identified Egypt as the "heartland of Islam," and the last bastion of civilization. He was by no means alone in his admiration: the great historian Ibn Khaldūn, another immigrant to Egypt, had himself been attracted by the reports which reached him in the Islamic west of Egypt's magnificence.[1]

That Egypt should have emerged over the course of the Middle Ages as the fulcrum of the Islamic world is a matter which, despite the antiquity of Egyptian civilization, requires explanation. After all, for much of the first several centuries of Islamic rule, the country was politically and culturally passive, following political developments and decisions taken in the east, the occasional efforts of an Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn or Abu'l-Misk Kāfūr notwithstanding. Moreover, the astounding fertility of the Nile valley cannot obscure the non-agricultural poverty of medieval Egypt. Apart from its vast expanse of unproductive desert land, Egypt consisted of a utilizable land

[1] On Abū Ḥāmid, who was actually born in Ramle, near Jerusalem, see Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'*, 12 vols. (Cairo, 1934), 7:234–7, and Ulrich Haarmann, "Rather the Injustice of the Turks than the Righteousness of the Arabs – Changing *'Ulamā'* Attitudes Towards Mamlūk Rule in the Late Fifteenth Century," *Studia Islamica*, 68 (1988), 63–64; on Ibn Khaldūn, see Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt: His Public Functions and His Historical Research (1382–1406). A Study in Islamic Historiography* (Berkeley, 1967), 18–19.

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area roughly the size of Holland, and was almost completely lacking in those resources which fueled the rapid expansion of late medieval European civilization, such as undeveloped arable, iron and wood, let alone specie.[2] Eventually, the scarcity of natural resources would take its toll.

Under the Fāṭimids, who constructed their capital city of Cairo next to the ancient town of Fusṭāṭ, the political ties binding Egypt to the dominant centers of Islamic culture in the east were broken, at least temporarily, and social and economic patterns began to take forms which would last until the end of the Middle Ages. But it was under their successors, the Ayyūbids, that the groundwork was laid for that cultural order which constituted the greatest glory of medieval Egypt, and which legitimately inspired the admiration of Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī and others. Despite economic and demographic crises and profound social tensions, that order found its fullest expression under the Mamlūk regime which ruled Egypt from the middle of the thirteenth century until the beginning of the sixteenth, leading one modern historian to describe Egyptian civilization in this period as "unparalleled since the days of the Ptolemies."[3]

For a variety of reasons, Egyptian society and culture in the later Middle Ages cannot be understood outside a broader international context. With its limited non-agricultural resources, Egypt depended for much of its material wealth on the transit trade of luxury goods which found their way from India and the east, passing through Egypt and Syria en route to European markets. The expansion of the Mongols eventually opened up new trade routes with central Asia to supplement those linking Egypt to the east via the Red Sea; commercial links in the Mediterranean between Egypt and Latin Europe were never completely interrupted, even during the centuries of the crusades. The prosperity generated by that trade supported an urban mercantile class which left a profound mark on social relations, and also financially undergirded the ruling military elite responsible for the religious, academic, and other public monuments which shaped the cultural life of cities such as Cairo. Moreover, after the destruction of Baghdād by the Mongols in 1258, Cairo emerged as the principal center of cultural activity of the Islamic Near East, at least until the Ottomans made Constantinople the seat of their empire in the mid-fifteenth century. Consequently, the Egyptian capital functioned as a cultural magnet, attracting Muslim scholars and others from throughout the Near East, immigrants who lent a profoundly cosmopolitan air to Egyptian society, at least at its higher levels. This international flavor, and Egypt's persistent links to broader patterns of

[2] Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Mamlūk Military System and the Blocking of Medieval Muslim Society," in Jean Baechler, John A. Hall and Michael Mann (eds.), *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1988), 128.

[3] Karl Stowasser, "Manners and Customs at the Mamlūk Court," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 13.

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Mediterranean commerce and west Asian politics and culture, must always be borne in mind.

A series of contrasts provides the themes which characterize Egyptian society and culture in this period. The first and most important is that of alterity and inclusion. Most historians have rightly stressed the social segmentation of medieval Islamic societies, and particularly the cities, of the Near East. Muslim writers defined the different layers of Egyptian society in various ways, as we shall see, and the competing demands of religion, wealth, occupation, ethnicity, and educational attainment, let alone gender, resulted in deep social fissures and impeded the emergence of a compelling local identity or political leadership. This social segmentation contributed to, although it was not perhaps the proximate cause of, the dominance of yet another social group, the Kurdish, Turkish, and (later) Circassian military elite which ruled Egypt throughout the period in question. Under the Mamlūks, the social alienation of rulers from the ruled reached its peak, as the legal status of the slave soldiers further distinguished them from the local population. Social identities, therefore, were largely defined in opposition to one another: thus, for example, Muslims were set against non-Muslims, or the Mamlūks against the local population.

Medieval Egyptian society was more, however, than the sum of its parts, and it functioned in such a way as to compensate for, and even to overcome, these various alterities. On the most obvious level, this involved the operation of networks of clientage which bound together various elements of the population, and which gave certain social groups the cohesion and strength necessary to protect themselves and their material and cultural interests.[4] The process went further, however, so that if social identities were characterized by alterity, social experience was characterized more by inclusion. Medieval Egyptian society may have been segmented, but in general it was not fractured: social patterns, cultural activities, even politics, embraced virtually all groups. Much recent research has emphasized the role of less powerful or marginalized sectors of the population, and their ability to assert their interests and make their voices heard, either through direct action or the mediation of more prominent individuals and groups.[5] Such tendencies should not be overstressed, but they did exist, and they contributed to making Egyptian society and culture more inclusive. Above all, we need to understand that widely disparate social groups all contributed to cultural activity at a variety of different levels, and that the interaction of culture, politics, and social relations was correspondingly complex.

[4] A point stressed by Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1967), and Susan Jane Staffa, *Conquest and Fusion: The Social Evolution of Cairo, AD 642–1850* (Leiden, 1977).

[5] See, for example, Boaz Shoshan, "Grain Riots and the 'Moral Economy': Cairo, 1382–1517," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 10 (1979–80), 459–78.

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An outstanding example of this complexity can be found in the case of the Ṣūfī Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235) and the posthumous altercations surrounding his poetry. Already in his own lifetime, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse had aroused controversy: many scholars of Islamic law were troubled by what they perceived as the poet's tendency to monism and a belief in divine incarnation (*ḥulūl*). Yet Ibn al-Fāriḍ's popularity grew, both on account of his poetry and a swelling belief in his personal sanctity, as reflected in visits to his tomb by Muslims of all stripes and colors. In the fifteenth century, the doctrinal disputes broke out into open and heated squabbling. Although the controversy involved conflicting and competing forms of Islamic identity – the mystical and the legal, the popular and the academic – the divisions were not drawn clearly along social or professional lines. The opponents of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry included many respectable members of the *'ulamā'*, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, al-Sirāj al-Bulqīnī, and the historian and jurist Ibn Khaldūn, who wished to see Ibn al-Fāriḍ's books burnt, but also a number of Ṣūfīs, including Ibrāhīm al-Matbūlī, an illiterate chick-pea vendor of enormous popularity, who was himself accused of antinomian ideas and pederasty, among other things. Moreover, Ibn al-Fāriḍ had his supporters among the *'ulamā'*, most notable among them the polymath Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, who wrote a treatise in the poet's defense. Behind the competing social and religious identities one can perceive intense personal quarrels and professional rivalry, but also (and more importantly) a political dimension. The mausoleum erected over Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb was endowed and supervised by leading amīrs of the Mamlūk caste, while the controversy engulfed several late Mamlūk sultans, in particular the pious and stern Qāyt Bāy, who found in the dispute an opportunity to reshuffle the higher ranks of the Islamic judiciary.[6]

A second polarity sets various institutional efforts to impose social order and to control religious and cultural expression against the persistent tendency of medieval Egyptian society to function within a structural framework which emphasized personal freedom and choice. As we shall see, Egyptian society, or at least its civilian components, tended to operate in informal ways. Whether in commerce, industry, or scholarship, personal relationships rather than formal institutions set the tone for much social exchange and interaction. This is not to say that institutions did not exist or were unimportant; one of the most important but least understood components of late medieval Egyptian society was the extensive, interlocking

[6] T. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine* (Columbia, SC, 1994), esp. 55–75; Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1982), 160–72; E. M. Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, vol. 1: *Biography and Background* (Cambridge, 1975), 54–55.

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bureaucratic organization through which the government administered the country, and which also served the financial and administrative needs of the ruling elite. On a cultural level, the boom in the construction of *madrasa*s during the Middle Ages, most of them at the initiative and expense of the ruling military and political class, represented an effort to give formal structure to and exert control over the social channels by which Islamic religious and legal knowledge was transmitted. But in academic as in other areas, institutional mechanisms of control confronted, and were modified by, the tenacious informality and flexibility of Egyptian social and cultural life.

The final theme concerns the opposition of the public to the private sphere, and the mechanisms by which the "home and the world" dichotomy was bridged. The separation of the public and the private is one of the most familiar motifs of Near Eastern and Islamic history, one fully at work in medieval Egyptian society. Domestic architecture, at least in the towns, reflected the need to protect the private sphere (the *ḥarīm*), whose inviolability was secured through winding, narrow entrances, limited openings to the public street, the use of wooden lattice-work (*mashrabiyya*) to conceal the interior from external viewers, and fully enclosed inner courtyards to provide light, air, and space.[7] But that private space did not define the parameters of social life – even, as we shall see, for those women who were theoretically confined to it. On the contrary, a society as large and complex, and a culture as vibrant as that of medieval Egypt were fundamentally communal affairs – and in almost every case, the impressive historical and literary legacy of the period which allows us to describe that society and culture was a product of open debate, definition, and transmission. The public and the private constantly jostled for position in community life. Higher education, for example, took place both in private teaching circles and in public institutions; those same institutions were founded by a private act. Even the sultans who endowed large religious establishments did so, not as the exercise of public authority, but as an act of private charity.[8]

Population: size and distribution

A study of Egyptian society and culture must identify, first of all, the basic contours of the population: who were the people who lived in the land of Egypt, and where did they live? No scholarly consensus has emerged regarding the size of Egypt's population in the Middle Ages, and it is doubtful that the nature of the sources will ever permit any reasonably

[7] Laila 'Ali Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture in Mamlūk Cairo," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 47–50.

[8] On the endowments generally, see Muḥammad M. Amīn, *al-Awqāf wa'l-ḥayāh al-ijtimā'iyya fi miṣr* (Cairo, 1980).

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certain estimate.[9] The same is not true for the city of Cairo, for which there is abundant if not unambiguous documentation. Modern estimates tend to cluster around the figure of half a million; one study of the plague and its effects on medieval Egypt, gave a pre-pandemic figure of 451,008. Such estimates may be slightly generous. An extensive analysis based upon the distribution of baths, mosques, and markets, put the population of Cairo at between 150,000 and 200,000 in the early fifteenth century. That figure, of course, reflects the demographic situation *after* the ravages of the plague in the mid-fourteenth century, in which Cairo lost approximately 40 percent of its population, and moreover does not include outlying areas such as Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo). Even with the slightly lower figures, however, the population of Cairo still eclipsed that of fourteenth-century London or Paris by a factor of three or four.[10] If we assume that the metropolis contained 10 percent of the entire population of Egypt, which was the case in the modern period until the recent explosion in the size of the city, we might suggest a very rough estimate of approximately 3,000,000 for Egypt as a whole.

Whatever the actual figures, there are several important points to be made about the character of Egypt's medieval population. One is that, from a broader perspective, it was probably trapped in a secular decline, one which lasted at least until the end of the Middle Ages. The shrinkage of the population was sharpened by the waves of pestilence which swept over Egypt from the mid-fourteenth century, but it may have been in motion before the first epidemic struck in 1347. Moreover, the population did not recover with the rapidity of that of Europe, in part because the plague recurred at such frequent intervals. A graphic demonstration of the decline in population can be seen in the abandonment of substantial numbers of villages between the Fāṭimid period and the mid-fifteenth century, as attested by a census of 1433–34.[11]

A second point is that groups of immigrants repeatedly left their mark on the people of Egypt and their society, from a cultural if not a demographic perspective. We have already observed how, under the Mamlūks, Cairo emerged as the cultural capital of the Islamic Near East, and attracted to it

[9] Compare David Ayalon, "Regarding Population Estimates in the Countries of Medieval Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 28 (1985), 1–19, and J. C. Russell, "The Population of Medieval Egypt," *JARCE*, 5 (1966), 69–82.

[10] Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977), 197–202; André Raymond, "Cairo's Area and Population in the Early Fifteenth Century," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 21–31.

[11] A. L. Udovitch, Robert Lopez and Harry Miskimin, "England to Egypt, 1350–1500: Long-term Trends and Long-distance Trade," in M. A. Cook (ed.), *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (London, 1970), 93–128, esp. 118–20; David Ayalon, "The Plague and Its Effects upon the Mamlūk Army," *JRAS* (1946), 67–73; Aḥmad Darrağ, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbay, 825–841/1422–1438* (Damascus, 1961), 64.

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scholars and others who sought out its intellectual resources and professional opportunities. The phenomenon of immigration, however, was much more widespread. The historian al-Maqrīzī noted that the inhabitants of Egypt were drawn from many races, including Copts (i.e., indigenous Christians and the descendants of those who inhabited the country before the Muslim conquest), Greeks, Arabs, Kurds, Daylamis and Ethiopians.[12] The Mamlūks, of course, primarily Turks and Circassians, represented a constant flow of immigrants; their numbers were supplemented by those known as the *wāfidiyya*, "immigrants," – warriors and tribesmen, many themselves of Tatar origin, who found themselves displaced by the upheavals associated with the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century and who sought refuge in the Mamlūk empire.[13] The Ayyūbids, finding Sunnī learning in Egypt in a state of decay after 200 years of Ismāʿīlī rule, imported scholars from Syria, Iraq and Iran to staff the educational and religious institutions they established.[14] Under the later Mamlūk sultans, jurists and mystics from Anatolia, the Caucasus and Iran, such as those fleeing the Timurid invasions, occupied a prominent place in Egyptian academic and religious life; at least one *madrasa* was founded specifically to benefit these "foreign Ḥanafī students."[15] Refugees and pilgrims from the Islamic west passed through Egypt en route to the holy cities of the Ḥijāz, and many of them elected to remain; the contingent of Maghribī scholars at the al-Azhar mosque was particularly large and well-defined.[16] As S. D. Goitein's research on the records of the Cairo Geniza has made clear, the tiny Jewish community too knew much immigration, both of merchants from north Africa and Spain who settled in Egypt, and refugees from southern France fleeing persecution in the early thirteenth century.[17] None of this was enough to offset the broader demographic decline, but the immigrants did in many ways enrich Egyptian society and culture.

What of the settled population of the country? Whatever the actual numbers, the vast majority of Egyptians lived in villages in the Nile Delta or in the valley to the south of Cairo, and led an agricultural existence. It is therefore striking that life in the *rīf*, the countryside, represents perhaps the

[12] Taqī ʾl-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ waʾl-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ waʾl-āthār*, 2 vols. (Būlāq, 1853–4), I, 48.

[13] On the *wāfidiyya*, see David Ayalon, "The Wafidiya in the Mamlūk Kingdom," *Islamic Culture* (1951), 89–104.

[14] Gary L. Leiser, "Notes on the Madrasa in Medieval Islamic Society," *The Muslim World*, 76 (1986), 19; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), 18.

[15] Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992), 91.

[16] Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981), 161.

[17] S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols. (Berkeley, 1967–94), I, 67–68 et passim.

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least understood and most under-researched aspect of medieval Egyptian social history. In large part this lacuna reflects the bias of the surviving sources, which were mostly of an urban, even metropolitan provenance. There are important exceptions, of course, such as Kamāl al-Dīn al-Udfuwī's fourteenth-century biographical dictionary of scholars and notables from southern Egypt, from which one of the most comprehensive and insightful modern studies of medieval Egypt has been fashioned.[18] Other sources, such as the endowment deeds (*waqfiyyas*) surviving from the Mamlūk period, contain a wealth of hitherto unexploited information on the *rīf*. But most literary sources, both historical and legal, present the view from the metropolis.

There were, to be sure, close social and economic ties linking the cities to rural life. Townsmen often owned agricultural land, or administered it as tax-farmers. More importantly, aspiring provincials moved from small towns and villages to Cairo in a steady stream, in order to take advantage of its cultural or professional resources, as the *nisbas* (descriptive surnames recording, among other things, place of origin) of the individuals portrayed in the contemporary biographical dictionaries suggest.[19] When an immigrant from the provinces climbed to a high social or political station, he found himself in a position to extend to family, friends and fellow provincials the benefits of his patronage. So, for example, when the famous scholar Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, originally from the town of Qūṣ in the Ṣaʿīd, held the office of Shāfiʿī *qāḍi'l-quḍāṭ* (chief judge) in Cairo at the end of the thirteenth century, numerous other Qūṣīs received appointments in the city as deputy *qāḍīs*, professional witnesses (*shāhids*), and teachers in *madrasas*.[20]

Nonetheless a vast material and mental gulf separated the inhabitants of Cairo from the majority who lived in the rural areas. Popular and sentimental visions of an "eternal Egypt," in which the pace of rural life has changed little over the centuries, should not obscure the enormous vicissitudes and uncertainties to which the peasants, especially, were exposed. The chronicles provide ample evidence of sudden, traumatic climatic and environmental shifts – torrential and unexpected rains that ruined crops, drought, waves of extreme heat or cold, plagues of locusts, and above all variations in the level of the Nile – shifts which had their most immediate, and probably most profound, impact on the peasantry.[21] The rural areas had their small

[18] Kamāl al-Dīn al-Udfuwī, *al-Tāliʿ al-saʿīd, jāmiʿ asmāʾ nujabāʾ al-ṣaʿīd*, ed. Saʿd Muḥammad Ḥasan (Cairo, 1966); Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976).

[19] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 3; Jean-Claude Garcin, "Le Caire et la province: Constructions au Caire et à Qūs sous les Mamelūks Baḥrides," *AI*, 8 (1969), 47.

[20] Garcin, "Le Caire et la province," 59–60; idem, *Un centre musulman*, 293–96.

[21] William F. Tucker, "Natural Disasters and the Peasantry in Mamlūk Egypt," *JESHO*, 24 (1981), 215–24.

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urban centers, towns such as Qūṣ which supported a limited but thriving array of cultural and educational activities, but in general the inhabitants of the agricutural hinterland confronted restricted opportunities. Promising students left the *rīf* for the city, and an outstanding individual such as Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd could smooth the way for many an aspiring provincial. Nonetheless, even this outlet may have narrowed over the course of the Middle Ages: a recent study of travel patterns among the Egyptian *ʿulamāʾ* in the fifteenth century indicates that most of those who had interest in and contact with the Delta region and Upper Egypt were low-ranking scholars and religious functionaries, "corroborat[ing] a state of economic and cultural underdevelopment" in the provinces.[22] To the inhabitant of Cairo or Alexandria, the peasant, in particular of Upper Egypt, was a foreigner, an outsider. In part this may have resulted from the suspicions aroused by the Shiʿi sentiments which persisted more resolutely in the Ṣaʿīd than elsewhere in Egypt, or from the lingering concentrations of Coptic Christians in the south. More generally, however, it reflects the urbanite's deep-seated sense of cultural superiority, an attitude which Goitein found rampant in the society that left its mark on the Cairo Geniza. Recalling the demons who had haunted the early church fathers in the Thebaid, Cairenes and foreign visitors alike viewed Upper Egypt as dangerous, a land of mischievous spirits, magicians, and terrifying wonders such as the Nubian with one eye and four fingers protruding from his face whom the chronicler Ibn Iyās records as having been seen in Aswān. That same writer pointedly noted that an individual named Mahdī, executed in Cairo in 1505 for sorcery, atheism, and disregard of the *sharīʿa* (he had performed his ablutions with milk), was "one of the Ṣūfīs of the Ṣaʿīd" (*min fuqarāʾ al-ṣaʿīd*).[23] It is significant that even Ibn Khaldūn, who extolled the contributions of nomadic peoples to human history, could view both the Bedouin and the peasantry as *badw*, "outsiders," i.e., in some respects beyond the pale of (urban) civilization.[24]

The Bedouin represent another under-researched social group in medieval Egypt. Here as elsewhere in the Near East and north Africa, nomadic tribes, Arab and Berber, had constituted a constant and equivocal presence on the edges of settled agricultural regions. Ibn Khaldūn's admiration for the positive force of collective tribal identity (*ʿaṣabiyya*) is well known, although it was not universally shared by those whose livelihood was made precarious by the ever-present threat of Bedouin depredation. In medieval Egypt, as

[22] Carl F. Petry, "Travel Patterns of Medieval Notables in the Near East," *Studia Islamica*, 62 (1985), 61; cf. Garcin, *Un centre musulman*, 433–34.

[23] Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, 5 vols. in 6 parts, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā et al. (Cairo, 1982–84), III, 267 and IV, 87; cf. Garcin, *Un centre musulman*, 432–33.

[24] As noted by Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 75, citing Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (New York, 1958), I, 249ff.

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elsewhere, the Bedouin lived in an ambiguous symbiotic relationship with the cities and the agricultural areas which supported them. On the one hand, they maintained positive and mutually beneficial relations with both the settled population and the state. Arab auxiliaries were employed in military service; some received from the state semi-feudal grants of agricultural income (*iqṭāʿāt*); the Arabs of the eastern desert "protected" the commercial and pilgrimage routes which linked Cairo and the Nile valley to the Red Sea ports of Quṣayr and ʿAydhāb. In certain times and places, as the nomads interacted with and settled among the sedentary population, it could be difficult to distinguish the Bedouin and the peasantry; 20 percent of the individuals named in al-Udfuwī's biographical dictionary possessed *nisbas* indicating a tribal origin. On the other hand, the constant presence of the desert as a refuge, and the existence there of truly nomadic tribes, served as a reminder of a distinct Bedouin identity and as a catalyst to political and cultural tension. If the tribes protected caravans crossing the desert, they could also, in times of mistrust, attack them. One historian noted that many of those Bedouin who settled in agricultural or even urban areas engaged in a process of "opportunistic adaptation," rather than true sedentarization, taking advantage of temporary conditions which drew them from their desert home. And over the course of the Mamlūk period, it seems that the power and identity of the nomadic tribes grew at the expense of the state, with the Bedouin emerging as the effective arbiters of political power in a number of regions in the south.[25]

The Hawwāra, a nomadic tribe of Berber origin, although completely Arabized by this period, provide an instructive example of the role the Bedouin could play. They had migrated to Egypt from further west in the early Middle Ages; some of them had participated in the Fāṭimid conquest of the country. Early in his reign, Sultan Barqūq settled the tribe in Upper Egypt. There they took up agriculture, playing an important role in the cultivation of sugar cane in particular, and their chief was given the *iqṭāʿ* of Girga, a town near Sohag. Increasingly the Hawwāra came to play a political role in the area, maintaining social order; by the early Ottoman period, their chief was recognized as the de facto governing authority for much of Upper Egypt.[26]

Whatever their proportion of the total population, however, it is the cities of medieval Egypt, and Cairo in particular, which loom largest in the view of the social and cultural historian. By far the lion's share of historical studies on medieval Egypt's society and culture focus on the city of Cairo, even those which purport to be studies of Egypt as a whole. In large

[25] A. H. Saleh, "Quelques remarques sur les Bédouins d'Égypte au Moyen Age," *SI*, 48 (1978), 45–70; Garcin, *Un centre musulman*, 360–410, 465–98.

[26] T. Lewicki and P. M. Holt, "Hawwāra," *EI2*; Saleh, "Quelques remarques," 47–8.

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measure, this reflects the urban bias of the medieval sources, most of which were produced by scholars, jurists, and functionaries resident in the Egyptian capital, and focus on events and conditions in the metropolis. Even sources which contain extensive data on rural areas often refract that information through the lens of urban institutions or concerns: for example, most of those surviving endowment deeds which record the boundaries, size, and condition of rural properties do so on behalf of religious and academic institutions based in the city. This urban orientation is familiar to students of modern Egypt as well, and in fact reflects older and broader patterns of Mediterranean and Near Eastern social history: it is no fluke that the Cairo Geniza has preserved marriage contracts forbidding the husband to move his family from the city to the *rīf*.[27]

This does not, of course, imply that the city formed a distinctive political or even social unit. The kind of corporate identity which came to characterize the medieval European town had no place in Islamic cities: as Ira Lapidus has demonstrated, it was unnecessary, given the range of political institutions available and the complex social processes at work within Cairo and other urban centers, and inappropriate, given the heterogeneity of the population.[28] Cairo was very much an open city: it was walled, to be sure, but after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's ambitious efforts to reconstruct the city's fortifications, which his successors ultimately left unfinished, no further attempt was made to extend the walls to embrace the rapidly growing suburbs.[29] As we have already noted, there was much movement to and especially from the provinces and other regions: whatever social obstacles may have intimidated a young immigrant and blocked his advancement, they did not include a lack of citizenship. The Islamic community, the *'umma'*, granted the city and its inhabitants no exclusive corporate identity.

But Cairo was unique, for its size, the range of its commercial enterprises, and the profusion of its cultural monuments and activities. For the entire period in question, Cairo was the political capital of empires which embraced the whole of Egypt, and usually Syria and the Ḥijāz as well. In contrast to European feudalism, the military institution which ruled Egypt in the late Middle Ages was an essentially urban phenomenon. Even during outbreaks of the plague, when the Mamlūks, an alien (and therefore especially susceptible) elite living close together in their urban households, suffered more grievously than the population as a whole, they did not flee

[27] S. D. Goitein, "Cairo: An Islamic City in the Light of the Geniza Documents," in Ira M. Lapidus (ed.), *Middle Eastern Cities* (Berkeley, 1969), 82–83; idem, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 75.

[28] Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, passim.

[29] K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1952), II, 41–63, esp. 59.

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the confines of the city.[30] Since wealth and political power congregated in the city, so too did culture and learning. It is no surprise, therefore, that we know more about Cairene society than any other in Egypt – arguably, more than any other in the medieval Islamic world.

Social groups and the cultural matrix

Medieval Egyptian society, like most, was deeply hierarchical. Defining the hierarchies into which it was organized, however, is not a clear-cut process. Contemporary Muslim writers (and not only Egyptians) tended to divide the population into four broad categories: the ruling military elite, the civilian notables, the common people and the "lumpenproletariat." The terminology employed, however, was imprecise. Higher social circles might be known as the *khāṣṣa* ("elite"), *a'yān* ("notables"), and *nās* (literally, "people," but often used in the Mamlūk period to designate the Mamlūk rulers themselves). The standard term for the "common people" was *'āmma*, but this vague word really only acquired meaning negatively, in opposition to *khāṣṣa*. At the bottom, the lowest social orders were known by a variety of names (*arādhil*, *awbāsh*, *ghawghā'*, *ḥarāfish*), and included those whose activities or occupations put them beyond the reach of polite society: prostitutes, usurers, professional entertainers, tanners, beggars, as well as rambunctious crowds more generally.[31] Taqi'l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, a bitter but astute observer of medieval Egyptian society, gave a more comprehensive and nuanced description of the social hierarchy in his treatise on the economy, coinage, and economic decline. At the top, he observed, were those who held the reins of power – in his day, the Mamlūk sultan and amīrs. Below them in the social pecking order came the rich merchants, who lived a life of affluence, followed by retailers, merchants of average means, and small shopkeepers. Interestingly, in the next category he places the peasantry, but the sense is less that they occupied a middle rank in the social order than that al-Maqrīzī did not know quite where to situate them. They were followed by a broad and disparate category, those who receive a stipend – "most of the *fuqarā'* and students [of law and theology]," as well as "most of the *ajnād al-ḥalqah* and the like" – thereby lumping together the stipendiaries of schools and Ṣūfī convents with the members of the non-elite military corps which was composed primarily, although not entirely, of the sons of Mamlūks. Below them ranked artisans

[30] David Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamlūk Military Aristocracy," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, 2 (1968), 311–29.

[31] Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 79–85. On the *ḥarāfish*, see William M. Brinner, "The Significance of the *Ḥarāfish* and their 'Sultan'," *JESHO*, 6 (1963), 190–215.

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and "salaried persons who possess a skill," and at the bottom, paupers and beggars.[32]

Thus the "classes" of medieval Egyptian society are difficult to define, and cannot easily be fit into either feudal or Marxian models. On the one hand, the defining characteristic of the different social gradations was a functional one: one's position in society depended more on what one did than who one was. It is striking that the various categories identified by al-Maqrīzī concern economic function, or (as in the case of the stipendiaries) an individual's dependent relationship to sources of wealth. One of the most important distinguishable social groups, although one which al-Maqrīzī did not identify per se, was the *'ulamā'*, those individuals of varying backgrounds and occupations who had acquired some level of learning in the Islamic religious and legal sciences and who participated in some way in the transmission of knowledge. On the other hand, status as a personal rather than a functional category was at least implicit in the social hierarchy. The Mamlūks were distinguished by their monopoly on military power and most important political offices, but one became a Mamlūk as a result of one's status as a freed slave originally acquired specifically for that purpose. Moreover, behind any functional or economic hierarchy lay the dichotomy of Muslim versus *dhimmī* (a protected non-Muslim, i.e., a Christian or a Jew). Despite the basic egalitarianism of Islamic law, even free Muslim men could be distinguished according to subtle social or even ethnic gradations, as in the law of *kafā'a* (marital equivalence). And of course if women were restricted to specific social functions, those restrictions resulted fundamentally from their status as women.[33]

The last point should remind us that behind all the social hierarchies discussed or implied by the sources, there lay the institution of the family, which for virtually everyone was the fundamental unit of society. Islamic law of course was deeply concerned with the status and relationship of the different members of the family, and the law-books provide a wealth of detail on the legal institution of marriage, but much of what we know about the actual social condition of the family in medieval Cairo is derived from the Geniza records.[34] This was a society which assumed that its members would be married, that to remain unmarried involved a needless exposure to

[32] Taqī 'l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, *Ighāthat al-umma bi-kashf al-ghumma*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyāda and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1957), 72–5; Adel Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics: A Study and Translation of al-Maqrīzī's Ighāthah* (Salt Lake City, 1994), 73.

[33] For cogent remarks on medieval Egyptian social hierarchies, see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 75–6. On the Muslim doctrine of *kafā'a*, see Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York, 1990), 85–88.

[34] Except where noted, the following is drawn from Goitein's *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 3: *The Family* (Berkeley, 1978).

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temptation and public disapprobation; it is no slur on the institution of marriage to remark that it formed, in a sense, the primary instrument of social control. In this respect it is important to remember that the "family" or household which underlay social identities was an extended family, generally under the supervision of some patriarch. Individuals married, but match-making was in most cases an impersonal process: marriages were arranged between families, and often involved cousins, both to ensure that wealth remained within the family and to protect the reputation of its women and thus the honor of the family. Reinforcing the element of control was the tendency of related families to live together, either in the same building or in neighboring structures.

It is worth pausing at this point to consider the special position of two groups of people within the structure of the family and its relationship to society at large. The first and most important is that of women. Aside from any restrictions and inequalities to which Muslim women were subject by the law, and with allowance for the enormous variation in individual circumstances which the intimacy and uncertainty of human relations require, it is clear that the position of women within marriage was a precarious one. The circumlocutions by which men referred to their wives, perhaps designed to protect their honor, nonetheless underline their subordinate station: "child" (*ṭifla*), "youth" (*ṣabiyya*), "little one" (*ṣaghīra*). As a general rule, a wife came to live with her husband's family; contact with her own relations might be severely restricted. In that position she was isolated and exposed, since it was to her male relatives – father, uncles, brothers – that a woman looked for protection. The plight of Amina, a central character in Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Bayn al-Qaṣrayn*, is surely one which many medieval Egyptian women faced. This vulnerability could be tempered by, among other things, conditions stipulated in the marriage contract – for example, that the couple live in close proximity to the bride's family; that she be granted easy access to her relatives; that the husband was to take no second wife or concubine without his first wife's approval. But it could never be entirely overcome. Divorce was apparently fairly common (although so, too, was remarriage), and widowhood could be a disaster. The Geniza records indicate that many Jewish widows were thrown back upon the public charity of the Jewish community, and there is no reason to suppose that the situation was any different among other sectors of the population. These records also show that husbands not infrequently deserted their wives and children, because of some marital dispute, or a love affair, or because of debt or business failure – a moral failing to which, presumably, Jewish men were no more predisposed than their Muslim or Christian peers.

Nonetheless, women were able to carve out for themselves spheres of independent action – to achieve freedom in the face of control, to cross the boundary between the private and the public. We will consider below one of

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the major cultural manifestations of that independence, in the area of the transmission of knowledge; for the moment, it is enough to consider their participation in economic activities. Even within a marriage, most women of necessity played an important economic role, in domestic chores such as spinning or grinding grain. They might also bring income to the family, for example by doing needlework or spinning for other households. Goitein noted that allusions to women working for non-familial clients became much more frequent from the thirteenth century, which may reflect a worsening of the general economic condition.[35] Actual "professions" which were open to women consisted mostly of occupations concerning women's health, such as midwives and wet nurses; services which helped to preserve social boundaries, such as those of match-makers; or occupations which were not socially respectable (even if patronized by men or women of all social levels), such as tattooists, coiffeuses, professional mourners, bath-house attendants and prostitutes.[36] If such activity was more common among the lower classes, wealthier women too played a role in the domestic economy by bringing property to their marriages, and in some cases managing it or administering family endowments.[37]

The extent to which women participated in public economic activity angered many jurists, who were anxious to reinforce those boundaries, such as gender, which in their view undergirded the social order. Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 1336), for example, who wrote a vitriolic treatise condemning various social and religious practices of which he disapproved, was of the opinion that, following a tradition ascribed to the Prophet's companions, a woman should leave her house on only three occasions: at marriage, to join her husband; for the burial of her parents; and on the occasion of her own death and interment. It is nonetheless clear from his discussion that women led far more extroverted lives than he thought proper, and that in particular they could be found conducting business in the markets – an impression confirmed by numerous tales from the *Thousand and One Nights*, and also by European travelers such as the Venetian Livio Sanuto, who remarked that Egyptian women moved about in the markets and elsewhere with considerable

[35] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, III, 132–35.

[36] See, for example, the list of occupations in Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Égypte* (Cairo, 1973), 43–87.

[37] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, III, 326–31; Huda Lutfi, "Al-Sakhāwī's *Kitāb al-Nisā'* as a Source for the Social and Economic History of Muslim Women During the Fifteenth Century AD," *The Muslim World*, 71 (1981), 117–19; Carl F. Petry, "A Paradox of Patronage," *The Muslim World*, 73 (1983), 199–201; idem, "Class Solidarity versus Gender Gain: Women as Custodians of Property in Later Medieval Egypt," in Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven, 1991), 122–42.

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freedom.[38] Al-Maqrīzī, like Ibn al-Ḥājj, disdained and feared the free movement of women, and drew upon a deep vein of ethnic prejudice to portray Egyptian women as dominant and their men as weak and emasculated, but such stereotypes should not disguise the wide variation in the restrictions actually faced by women in medieval Egypt.[39] Women of the lower classes necessarily moved about with much greater freedom than did their social betters. Moreover, the chronicles report numerous occasions when the authorities attempted, with varying but never permanent degrees of success, to restrict the public activities of women. In 1438, for example, Sultan Baybars, fearing an outbreak of plague, consulted the *qāḍīs* and leading scholars as to the sins for which God was punishing them. The men of religion identified two – adultery, and that "women adorned themselves and walked through the streets night and day" – and in response, the sultan issued an edict forbidding women to leave their homes.[40]

Another social group best considered under the rubric of the family is that of domestic slaves. In Egypt as in other medieval Islamic societies, slavery was largely an urban phenomenon. As members of the households of the masters who owned them, slaves discharged a variety of functions, ranging from domestic chores to business affairs to (in the case of concubines) satisfying their masters' sexual pleasure and producing offspring. Since Islamic law forbade the enslavement of those born within the Dār al-Islām, most slaves in Egypt were imported from central Asia, Europe, Abyssinia and sub-Saharan Africa. Coming to Egypt as strangers, they were absorbed into their masters' households, in which they were trained, schooled in religion, and acculturated to their new Egyptian homes. Well-known Qur'ānic verses enjoined Muslims to treat their slaves well, influencing the structure of domestic slavery and the strong and personal ties which often bound slaves to their masters. At its best, domestic slavery was thus characterized by a benign paternalism, in which, for example, masters might help to arrange marriages for their slaves. As with the ancient Islamic institution of clientage (*walā'*), close personal ties often survived the emancipation, which was frequently the slave's good fortune; it was not uncommon, for example, for an individual's freed slaves to be beneficiaries of their former master's family *waqf*.[41]

[38] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal al-shar' al-sharīf*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1929), I, 244–45; C. Schefer, *Le voyage d'outremer de Jean Thenaud* (Paris, 1884), 33n. See also André Raymond and Gaston Wiet, *Les marchés du Caire: Traduction annotée du texte de Maqrīzī* (Cairo, 1979), 78–80, and Huda Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Shar'i Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises," in Keddie and Baron, *Women in the Middle East*, 99–121.

[39] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 49–50.

[40] Taqī 'l-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyāda, 4 vols. in 12 parts (Cairo, 1934–73), IV, 1032.

[41] Shaun E. Marmon, "Slavery, Islamic World," in Joseph R. Strayer (ed.), *Dictionary of*

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The most prominent slaves in medieval Egyptian society were, of course, the Mamlūks, the slave-soldiers who formed an increasingly important military element under the Ayyūbids and who, in the middle of the thirteenth century, came to rule in their own right. Their organization and institution are considered elsewhere in this volume; here we will focus upon their impact on Egyptian society and culture. The attitudes of local Egyptians, and in particular the *'ulamā'*, towards their foreign rulers were decidedly mixed, and reflect the fundamental ambiguity of the Mamlūks' place in Egyptian society. They were distinguished from the local population, first and foremost, by their ethnicities, which were in fact varied, although many local writers thought of them generically as "Turks." As such, they shared in popular conceptions about the characteristics of the Turks, conceptions which in fact have an ancient pedigree in Islamic literary traditions. It was widely held that the Turks were by nature warlike and proficient in arms; some, such as Ibn Khaldūn, credited them with saving Islamic civilization from the twin perils of Frankish crusaders and Mongol heathen. Already in the late twelfth century, before the Mamlūks came to power, the Egyptian-born poet Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk had written a panegyric to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty, remarking that "the Arab community has become mighty by the nation of the Turks, and the crusader king has been humbled by Ibn Ayyūb [Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn]. For in the time of Ibn Ayyūb, Aleppo became part of Egypt, and Egypt part of Aleppo" – even though Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn himself was a free-born ethnic Kurd.[42] Others drew less charitable conclusions from the popular stereotypes, seeing in the Turks a boorish, uncultured people; as late as the end of the fifteenth century, the historian and polymath al-Suyūṭī saw the Mamlūks less as the saviors of Islam than as the heirs of the Turkish soldiers who had in the ninth and tenth centuries humiliated and eclipsed the caliphate in Baghdad.[43]

The Mamlūks, whose lingua franca was a Turkish dialect rather than Arabic, deliberately set themselves apart from the native Egyptian population, constructing an ideology of otherness to support their political legitimacy. Their Turkish names distinguished them sharply from their local subjects, a distinction they seem consciously to have maintained: apart from a few Bedouin chiefs, virtually no native Egyptians emulated their masters

the Middle Ages (New York, 1988), XI, 330–3; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 130–47; Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, "Un document concernant le mariage des esclaves au temps des Mamlūks," *JESHO*, 13 (1970), 309–14; Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 136.

[42] Quoted in Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*, 21.

[43] Jean-Claude Garcin, "Histoire, opposition politique et piétisme traditionaliste dans le *Ḥusn al-Muḥādarat* de Suyūṭī," *AI*, 7 (1967), 33–89. On medieval views of the Turks/Mamlūks generally, see Ulrich Haarmann, "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turks from the 'Abbasids to Modern Egypt," *IJMES*, 20 (1988), 175–96, and idem, "Rather the Injustice of the Turks."

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by adopting their nomenclature.[44] In dress and comportment, too, the Mamlūks formed a breed apart, enjoying a monopoly on horseback riding, at least within the confines of the city, as well as on sword-bearing. Their clothing instantly marked the Mamlūks as members of the ruling caste; ironically, their taste for fur-trimmed vestments may have contributed to the dissemination of the plague in the mid-fourteenth century, since many of the furs were imported from those central Asian regions from which the plague bacillus spread.[45] Both the sultanic residence in Cairo's Citadel and the smaller amīral households provided forums for a flourishing court culture, one centered around military exercises and activities (*furūsiyya*), from which native Egyptians were excluded, as well as around Turkish literature of both a secular and a religious nature, which most Egyptians could not understand and which many scorned.[46]

It would be seriously misleading, however, to overstress the Mamlūks' alienation from native Egyptian society, or to underestimate the links which bound them to broader, international patterns of Islamic culture. The Mamlūks were, in fact, deeply embedded in the society over which they ruled, and were bound to their subjects by complex ties of patronage, as well as more intimate human relations. In the first place, of course, it was their wealth which provided much of the physical infrastructure for economic and cultural life: the majority of Cairo's mosques and *madrasa*s, for instance, were established and endowed by leading members of the ruling elite.[47] Constructing a mosque or school was not an isolated event: once in operation, a religious or academic institution could support a wide range of urban activities and foundations, from markets to bath-houses. Patterns of growth in the western suburbs of Cairo, such as Būlāq and, later, the quarter known as Azbakiyya, testify to the degree to which even the physical shape of the city depended upon the direction and expenditures of the sultan and leading amīrs.[48] As closely tied as they were to Cairo, the Mamlūks' patronage of cultural monuments was felt throughout the country, and in a provincial town such as Qūṣ, where Mamlūk amīrs were resident, could play

[44] Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamlūk Military Aristocracy," 322.

[45] Dols, *The Black Death*, 56–57; on their clothing, see L. A. Mayer, *Mamlūk Costume* (Geneva, 1952), esp. 21–35.

[46] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The Citadel of Cairo: Stage for Mamlūk Ceremonial," *AI*, 24 (1988), 25–79; Karl Stowasser, "Manners and Customs at the Mamlūk Court," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 13–20; A. Bodrogligeti, "Notes on the Turkish Literature at the Mameluke Court," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientarum Hungaricae*, 14 (1962), 273–82; Barbara Flemming, "Literary Activities in Mamlūk Halls and Barracks," in Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (ed.), *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet* (Jerusalem, 1977), 249–260.

[47] Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 128ff.

[48] Nelly Hanna, *An Urban History of Būlāq in the Mamlūk and Ottoman Periods* (Cairo, 1983); Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and Its Environs: From Azbak to Ismā'īl, 1476–1879* (Cairo, 1985).

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an important role both in encouraging local cultural life and in linking it to the more cosmopolitan activity of the capital.[49]

The Mamlūks' ties to Egyptian society were by no means limited to recycling the wealth which, as the ruling elite, they extracted from the country. Some Mamlūks married local women, and their children routinely did so. Moreover, their status as rulers, and the political institutions they inherited from earlier regimes, obliged them to take a keen interest in local affairs. Each of the leading amīrs supervised a household which supported a wide variety of retainers, ranging from Mamlūk cadets and domestic slaves to craftsmen and accountants. These households both functioned as semi-contained domestic economies of their own, and also had a profound impact on external economic fortunes. The Mamlūk government itself, it has been suggested, can be seen as simply an enormous extended family or "household economy," distributing food, clothing, and cash to a web of clients "on the basis of political criteria and in accord with state policy rather than economic efficiency."[50] However far we wish to take it, the metaphor suggests a degree of concern and paternalism which should modify the common image of the Mamlūks as a rapacious foreign ruling class.

Perhaps the most surprising and intriguing examples of the ties that bound the Mamlūks to Egyptian society can be found in the intersection of political and religious affairs. Religion was necessarily a matter of great concern to a regime which posed as the defender of Islam against its foreign enemies, and the Mamlūks intervened actively in religious matters. Naturally the Mamlūks left many strictly judicial matters to the Islamic judges (*qāḍīs*) whom they appointed to administer the *sharī'a*, although it is important to remember that Sultan Baybars profoundly altered the structure of the Islamic judiciary by appointing four chief *qāḍīs*, one for each of the Sunnī schools of law (*madhāhib*), rather than one, as had been the rule in the decades before 1265.[51] Having tied their own interests to those of the society over which they ruled, the Mamlūks found it necessary to intervene directly even in matters which were properly under the purview of the *qāḍīs*, if those matters threatened their control of material resources or the political stability of their state: for example, in questions concerning *awqāf*, or in politically sensitive allegations of unbelief (*kufr*).[52]

It is only natural that much of the Mamlūks' interest in things Islamic grew out of their political concerns. Even the construction of schools,

[49] Garcin, *Un centre musulman*, 256–60.

[50] Ira M. Lapidus, "The Grain Economy of Mamlūk Egypt," *JESHO*, 12 (1969), 12.

[51] Joseph H. Escovitz, "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamlūk Empire," *JAOS*, 102 (1982), 529–31; Jorgen S. Nielsen, "Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars and the Appointment of Four Chief Qāḍīs (663/1265)," *SI*, 60 (1984), 167–76.

[52] Jorgen S. Nielsen, *Secular Justice in an Islamic State: Maẓālim Under the Baḥrī Mamlūks, 662/1264–789/1387* (Leiden, 1985), esp. 43–45, 99–102.

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mosques, and Ṣūfī convents must be viewed in the light of the impact such institutions could have on the course of Mamlūk politics, by conveying status and prestige to the Mamlūk whose name was reflected in that of the building (e.g., the Ẓāhiriyya *madrasa* of Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars), and by providing a safe haven, in the institution's endowment, for at least a portion of the founder's wealth.[53] But the Mamlūks were also Muslims; most were unambiguously so, and many were enthusiastic converts to the faith. Religion and learning thereby provided another point of contact with native Egyptian society. Quite a few advanced beyond the basic grounding in Arabic, the Qur'ān, and the religious sciences which formed a part of their initial training, to immerse themselves more deeply in the study of *ḥadīth* or Islamic jurisprudence, and some became noted transmitters of religious knowledge in their own right. Sanjar al-Jāwulī, for example, who established a *madrasa* outside Cairo in 1329, devoted the eight years he spent in prison to copying the Qur'an and other religious volumes, and eventually issued *fatwās* and wrote a commentary on a collection of *ḥadīth* attributed to al-Shāfi'ī. Taghrī Birmish, a fairly typical Mamlūk of the early fifteenth century who died in 1448, was fluent in Arabic and studied with the leading *ḥadīth* transmitters of his day; he was known by contemporaries as *al-Faqīh*, "the Jurist," for the depth and breadth of his religious knowledge.[54] Indeed, virtually all of the important sultans of the last century of Mamlūk rule, including al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, Jaqmaq, and Qāyt Bāy, were known for their piety and interest in the Islamic sciences – although as a ruler, each one could be as strict and as terrifying as circumstances demanded.

The Mamlūks' interest in things religious provides an important measure of the extent to which they were integrated into local Egyptian cultural patterns. The Mamlūk regime was also, however, tied to an international Sunnī culture which embraced Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and Iran. The dislocations associated with the Timurid invasions provoked a westward migration parallel to that which had occurred a century and a half earlier under the Mongols, and again in the fifteenth century Egypt became a place of refuge for scholars, artists, and craftsmen from places further east. Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī, a Turkish-speaking jurist from eastern Anatolia, rose to prominence at the courts of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh and al-Ashraf Barsbāy, composing a panegyric biography of the former and orally translating his own chronicle into Turkish for the latter; he was not the only scholar to employ his knowledge of the Mamlūk lingua franca to his professional benefit. The

[53] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 128–42.

[54] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 142–160; idem, "'Silver Threads Among the Coal': A Well-Educated Mamlūk of the Ninth/Fifteenth Century," *SI*, 73 (1991), 109–25; Ulrich Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 33 (1988), 81–114.

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secular arts, too, experienced a blossoming in the fifteenth century under the conjunction of Mamlūk patronage and turmoil in the east. Artisans from Tabrīz were, by the second quarter of that century, manufacturing glazed tiles in Fusṭāṭ, while by the end of the century, an Egyptian rug industry had begun with the migration of craftsmen from northwestern Iran. Illustrated Turkish editions of the Alexander romances and the Persian epic, the *Shāhnāmeh*, were among the more popular literary productions of the late Mamlūk court.[55]

For all of their prominence and power, however, the Mamlūks represented only a thin slice of medieval Egyptian society. The civilian population over whom they ruled, and in particular that portion of it concentrated in the major urban centers, was characterized by a fluidity and complexity to which schematic hierarchies such as that of al-Maqrīzī cannot do justice. We can make broad distinctions of socio-economic power (distinguishing, for example, an affluent bourgeoisie from the poorer common people) or identify particular groups by function (such as merchants, bureaucrats and *'ulamā'*). It is important to remember, however, that class lines were not sharply drawn: a merchant might devote much of his time to scholarship, while the population enjoyed, for the medieval world, a surprising degree of social mobility.

Cairo was, above all, a city of commerce. Perhaps al-Maqrīzī exaggerated when he claimed that 12,000 shops were located on the central thoroughfare, Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, but all the sources convey an image of bustling commercial activity. Markets specializing in one product or another were scattered across the city, as were caravanserais (known variously as *funduqs*, *khāns*, *wakālas*, or *qaysāriyyas*) in which both foreign and native businessmen housed their goods and conducted their affairs. Commerce lay at the heart of the city's public life, and its streets were crowded with hawkers, street vendors, and the benches on which merchants sat to make their exchanges. So busy were the thoroughfares that the chroniclers frequently comment on the dangers posed by impassable throngs. Ibn Iyās, for example, reports an incident which occurred in 1508, in which loads of linen on the backs of several camels grazed a merchant's lamp and were accidentally set alight, sending the frightened animals galloping through the crowded streets, crushing numerous passers-by in their flight.[56]

The range of commercial activity, and of the character of those engaged in it, was enormous. At the top, affluent merchants dominated international

[55] Esin Atıl, "Mamluk Painting in the Late Fifteenth Century," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 159–71; Marilyn Jenkins, "Mamluk Underglaze-Painted Pottery: Foundations for Future Study," ibid., 95–114; Ira M. Lapidus, "Mamluk Patronage and the Arts in Egypt: Concluding Remarks," ibid., 173–81.

[56] Raymond and Wiet, *Les marchés du Caire*, passim, esp. 42–48; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 374; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, IV, 135.

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trade. The most prominent of them were the mysterious group known as the Kārimiyya, who conveyed Indian pepper and other spices up the Red Sea to the ports of 'Aydhāb or Quṣayr, and thence overland to Qūṣ and ultimately to Fusṭāṭ and Cairo, until Sultan Baybars in effect eliminated their livelihood by declaring a state monopoly over the lucrative spice trade.[57] But international commerce had an impact on social ranks well below that of the bourgeois elite who controlled it: Jewish brides in Fusṭāṭ in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were loath to be married without at least one Rūmī (European) kerchief in their trousseaux.[58] At the bottom of the commercial ladder, perhaps, were the porters who transported water, on their own backs or on those of camels, from the Nile to the city, a task which grew in importance as the river receded to the west: the traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa estimated their number in the early fourteenth century at 12,000.[59] But at all levels, trade and industry were characterized by a high degree of specialization and diversity. The medieval Egyptian economy was capable of supporting workers in such specialized fields as the collection of down for pillows and cushions, or the making of crystal, gold, or silver kohl sticks (an important item in a bride's trousseau); even the production of food was "industrialized," in a sense, as meals were frequently prepared as a commercial activity in the markets for consumption at home. At the same time, the monetization of the economy required a sophisticated system of credit and exchange which produced a wealthy capitalist class and made Cairo a center of international finance for the entire Near East.[60]

The sophistication of the Egyptian economy is important because the commercial class, and the patterns of interaction and exchange characteristic of the commercial enterprise, set the tone for much of the social and cultural order. Goitein described early medieval Egyptian society as fundamentally bourgeois, and although he was correct to note a restriction of opportunity and hardening of class and cultural divisions from the thirteenth century, as a result of economic decline, international conflict, and what he called "intolerance and fanaticism,"[61] nonetheless something of the bourgeois spirit continued to infuse the life of Cairo to the end of the Middle Ages. Oleg Grabar has perceived reflections of this in the monumental architecture of the medieval city, even in those institutions founded and endowed by

[57] On the Kārimiyya, see Walter J. Fischel, "The Spice Trade in Mamlūk Egypt," *JESHO*, 1 (1958), 157–74, and Gaston Wiet, "Les marchands d'épices sous les sultans mamlouks," *Cahiers d'histoire égyptienne*, 7 (1955), 81–147.

[58] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 46.

[59] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Travels*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb, 3 vols. (Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, vols. 110, 117, 141) (London, 1958), I, 42; André Raymond, "Les porteurs d'eau," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, 58 (1958), 183–202; Raymond and Wiet, *Les marchés du Caire*, 62–9.

[60] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, passim, esp. 75–116 and 229–66.

[61] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 29.

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Mamlūks, such as the series of *madrasa*s, mosques and *khānqāh*s (Ṣūfī convents) which still line the major thoroughfares of the city, and whose facades merge one with the next. With the rare exception of an institution as large and imposing as the *madrasa* of Sultan Ḥasan, Mamlūk-period monuments betray a remarkable similarity and a lack of truly outstanding, individualizing features. They are to be understood, not as expressions of "princely" or imperial grandeur, but as statements of integration into an urban society which valued knowledge and piety, and which relied upon the private exercise of power and wealth to generate its cultural traditions and to protect its social order.[62]

Commercial activity, in fact, blended directly a[6262]nd thoroughly into the broader social and cultural patterns of the city. The mixing of religion and business is of course an ancient motif in Near Eastern cities, as witnessed by Jesus's encounter with the moneychangers at the temple in Jerusalem. In medieval Cairo and other Egyptian towns, too, a religious festival was equally an opportunity for commercial exchange. On a more quotidian level, shops shared virtually every major street with various houses of worship; a *madrasa* such as that founded by Sultan al-Ghawrī was literally built around a warren of commercial stalls which were rented out to provide income for the institution. In one analysis the entire city took the form of a "bazaar," characterized by a "fluid pattern of social interchange and of daily living," in which religious institutions, baths, and commercial establishments were mixed together because the individuals who used them passed easily from prayer and study to work and business, and thence to social interaction and relaxation.[63]

The values and organization of the commercial class impressed themselves upon the civilian population in all its different spheres. Commercial activity, for example, was built around friendship, informal mechanisms of control and contracts freely entered into; at least until the end of the Middle Ages, corporate bodies similar to medieval European guilds were unknown in Cairo and other Islamic cities. It is significant that even the terms used to describe this activity paralleled those in other walks of life, most notably scholarship and the transmission of knowledge. The close personal cooperation which was the mainstay of both international and local trade was known as *ṣuḥba*, "companionship," a word which also described the relationship between a teacher and his closest pupils. The exchange of goods was accomplished in a "sitting" (*majlis*) or a "circle" (*ḥalqa*); the same terms were used to describe the setting of intellectual exchange. The Arabic word *'arḍ* represented the offering of goods for sale, and also a student's

[62] Oleg Grabar, "Reflections on Mamlūk Art," *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), 11; cf. R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of the Mamlūk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *SI*, 35 (1972), 69–119.

[63] Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 114.

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exposition of a text or problem. Since commercial exchanges were built upon personal relationships, a written contract or deed was, in most instances, unnecessary; books were essential to the academic enterprise, but it was the oral transmission of these texts which was regarded as definitive.[64]

All this reflects a society whose very sophistication was built around a mode of social exchange which emphasized flexibility and personality. This is not to say that there were no mechanisms of institutional control, or, to put it differently, that the public never intruded on the private. Medieval governments frequently tried to impose order on a city which threatened to spiral out of control, for example, by ordering the demolition of recently built structures which had been constructed illegally and which encroached upon the streets and impeded traffic, as Sultan Qāyt Bāy did, with the blessing of a Shāfi'ī *qāḍī*, in 1477.[65] In a densely populated city, fire was an omnipresent threat, one which the government sought to contain by periodically requiring shopkeepers to maintain containers of water to combat any sudden conflagration, although its efforts were largely unavailing. Despite precautions, and despite the organized response of both the Mamlūks and the public, one fire burned out of control in 1321; by the third day, it was "beyond the power of humans" to do anything about it, so that the crowds were convinced that the Day of Resurrection was at hand (although eventually they came to lay the blame on two Coptic monks).[66]

It is important to remember, too, that the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk governments inherited and maintained a sophisticated bureaucratic and financial apparatus, a bureaucracy which produced several compendious manuals outlining administrative forms and procedures, such as that composed by al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418).[67] Both individual amīrs and the state itself required significant numbers of bureaucrats and accountants to administer estates, collect revenues, and supervise the disbursement of funds. These functionaries emerged from a variety of social backgrounds: some were *dhimmīs*, especially Coptic Christians, or recent converts to Islam; many of the high-ranking officials were immigrants from Syria and Palestine; quite a

[64] Compare Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I, 164–9 and 192–7, and Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 21–43.

[65] Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, III, 123–24.

[66] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, II, 220–26, and Abū 'l-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa'l-qāhira*, 16 vols. (Cairo, 1929–72), IX, 63–72; cf. Raymond and Wiet, *Les marchés du Caire*, 54–57.

[67] Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1914–28). On the bureaucrats, see Petry, *Civilian Elite*; D. S. Richards, "The Coptic Bureaucracy under the Mamlūks," in André Raymond et al. (eds.), *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1969), 373–81; and Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration dans l'état militaire mamlūk (IX^e/XV^e siècle)* (Damascus, 1991).

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few tied themselves by marriage to amīral families as well as to those of the scholarly and juristic elite, and so occupied a medial position in the diffusion of power, information, and cooperation between the state and the society over which it ruled. Personal relationships and informal contacts often determined the shape of this social group as well – witness the importance of family relationships and ties of clientage to a bureaucratic career – but the bureaucracy provided the institutional mechanism by which the military elite controlled the country and its sources of wealth. Moreover, this administration was centralized in the city of Cairo: all other administrative authorities were firmly subordinated to those at the center.

One of the most important channels of social control, not just in the markets but in society at large, was that of the *muḥtasib*. The title of this official, appointed by the sultan, is often translated as "market inspector," but this rendering fails to convey the full range of his responsibilities or the tensions implicit in his jurisdiction. On the one hand, he was charged with the regulation and supervision of market exchanges, ensuring that they violated neither the law (*sharʿ*) nor accepted custom (*ʿurf*); that money-changers did not short-change their customers, or that butchers did not sell illicit or adulterated meat. But the *ḥisba* (the office of the *muḥtasib*) was also a religious office, one deriving ultimately from the Qur'anic injunction "to command the lawful and forbid the illicit" (for example, *sūra* 3, verse 104). As such, its holder was responsible for ensuring that Muslims, individually and collectively, properly discharged duties which were spiritual and private in nature: for example, that Muslim parents arranged for the circumcision of their children. More to the point, his mandate extended to investigating actively malfeasances which he himself suspected (as opposed to the *qāḍī* who could act only if some individual brought a formal complaint); his investigations were abetted by the secular authority which he wielded (which one medieval writer described as emanating "from the power of the sultanate," *min salāṭat al-salṭana*).[68] As such, his jurisdiction represents not only a point of contact between secular and spiritual authority, but also one in which the public sphere intruded most aggressively upon the private. It is characteristic of the tensions implicit in the office of the *muḥtasib* in late medieval Egypt that it was held, at different times, by scholars and jurists (such as Taqi'l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī and his rival Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī), and also by Mamlūk amīrs.[69] The *ḥisba* was one of the few offices of which that was true.

[68] On the *muḥtasib* and his jurisdiction in medieval Egypt, see Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*, ed. Reuben Levy (Cambridge, 1938) (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, n.s. vol. 12); this final phrase is found on p. 10.

[69] Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Rāziq, "La *ḥisba* et le *muḥtasib* en Égypte au temps des Mamlouks," *Annales islamologiques*, 13 (1977), 115–78; idem, "Les *muḥtasibs* de Fosṭāṭ au temps des Mamlūks," *AI*, 14 (1978), 127–46.

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This tension in the office of the *muḥtasib* is suggestive of the ambiguities which characterized relations between the *'ulamā'* and the state more generally. Both the social organization of the *'ulamā'* and patterns of cultural transmission were deeply affected by the passing of the Shi'i Fāṭimid regime at the end of the twelfth century and its replacement by the militantly Sunnī Ayyūbid dynasty and, later, the Mamlūks. While the Fāṭimids apparently never succeeded in converting many Egyptians to their Ismā'īlī brand of Shi'ism, under their rule Sunnī intellectual life does seem to have stagnated, as an interesting incident from the end of the Fāṭimid period demonstrates. A dispute developed among the Sunnī *'ulamā'* over the old question as to whether human activities were uncreated and pre-existent, and the argument degenerated into violence. To settle the issue, it was agreed to write to the scholars of Baghdād (then the pre-eminent cultural center of the Sunnī world), and ask them to compose *fatwā*s on the matter. Naturally, the Baghdādī scholars issued contradictory opinions, so that the issue was left unresolved; but what is of interest is the intellectual dependence of Egyptian *'ulamā'* at the end of the Fāṭimid period.[70] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his immediate successors recognized their state of under-development, for many of the professors appointed to Ayyūbid *madrasa*s were of foreign origin.[71] Indeed, their policies, and in particular the profusion of new religious institutions which they established and endowed, were designed to strengthen the *'ulamā'* and the channels of Sunnī learning, both to combat a Christian population which had seen a resurgence of status and power under the late Fāṭimids, and, more broadly, to bring to Egypt the renascence of Sunnī identity and culture which had begun in Iraq and Iran and spread eastward into Syria during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[72]

As a result, a close but always uneasy alliance developed between the *'ulamā'* and the new Sunnī regimes. This relationship was strengthened, of course, by the interest in the religious sciences taken by the military rulers, as described above. From the scholars' perspective, it took the material form of patronage by members of the ruling elite, and also by leading representatives of the bureaucratic class.[73] Much of that patronage centered on the vast network of religious and educational institutions constructed over the course of the Middle Ages. The first Sunnī *madrasa*s in Egypt were established in Alexandria, by the Andalusian Mālikī jurist al-Ṭurṭūshī and later by a Sunnī

[70] Gary L. Leiser, "Ḥanbalism in Egypt before the Mamlūks," *Studia Islamica*, 54 (1981), 166.

[71] Leiser, "Notes on the Madrasa," 19.

[72] Gary L. Leiser, "The *Madrasa* and the Islamization of the Middle East: The Case of Egypt," *JARCE*, 22 (1985), 29–47.

[73] On relationships of clientage between bureaucrats and academics, and intercession by the former in favor of the latter, see Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration*, 373–82.

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vizier, Riḍwān ibn al-Walākhshī, as a result of which that city became a hotbed of rejuvenated Sunnīsm at the end of the Fāṭimid period.[74] Under the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks, however, it was the sultan and the amīral class who undertook the construction and endowment of many, and virtually all of the most important, of the *madrasa*s, Ṣūfī convents, and teaching mosques which provided a new infrastructure for worship and the transmission of religious learning. These were mostly in Cairo, but also in provincial towns such as Alexandria and Qūṣ, the latter functioning as a regional center of education in the Ṣa'īd. The salaries and stipends (often supplemented by accommodation and meals) which these institutions provided for the teachers and students associated with them became an important source of income for the *'ulamā'*, and the founders often retained for themselves and their descendants some degree of control over appointments to positions in them.[75]

The famous historian and jurist Ibn Khaldūn, an emigré from the Maghrib, provides a noteworthy example of the degree to which a scholar's career might depend upon Mamlūk patronage. His reputation had preceded his arrival in Egypt in 1382, but despite an invitation to lecture at the al-Azhar mosque, he did not receive his first appointment to an official teaching post until 1384, when Sultan Barqūq made him a professor at the Qamḥiyya *madrasa*. His inaugural lecture there is reproduced in his autobiography, and gives a good sense of the ideological support which the Mamlūks' patronage bought them. In it, he lauded the Mamlūks, "this victorious band of Turks," as the protectors of Islam, and praised Barqūq as "the unsheathed sword of God against the infidel enemy."[76] Later, the sultan appointed him to the *madrasa* which he himself had established on Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, although he was soon removed from that post through pressure from rivals within the court. After a reconciliation, however, Barqūq again appointed him professor, this time of *ḥadīth*, at the important *madrasa* established by the amīr Ṣarghitmish in 1356.[77]

The *'ulamā'* found themselves affected by the state in other ways as well. The Ayyūbid sultans consciously fostered the development of the different Sunnī schools of law (*madhāhib*), which had languished under the rule of the Ismā'īlī Fāṭimids, although they never served in Egypt as a focus for deep and sometimes exclusive social identification as they did further to the east, for example, in Khurāsān.[78] The Ayyūbids promoted in particular the

[74] Leiser, "The *Madrasa* and the Islamization of the Middle East," 37–40.
[75] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 96–107.
[76] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Ta'rīf*, ed. Muḥammad ibn Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo, 1951), 279–85.
[77] Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt*, 20–22, 26–27.
[78] Ira M. Lapidus, "Ayyūbid Religious Policy and the Development of the Schools of Law in Cairo," *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1969), 279–86.

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members of Shāfi'i school, from among whom they appointed the chief judge. It is significant that Sultan Baybars's appointment in 1265 of four chief *qāḍīs*, one for each of the four Sunnī *madhāhib*, a policy which remained in place to the end of the Mamlūk period, although largely unopposed at the time, was bitterly criticized by the fifteenth-century jurist al-Suyūṭī, who felt that the policy undermined the restorative work of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, which had been based upon the primacy of the Shāfi'ī school, and replaced Sunnī unity with division.[79]

The division which these scholars feared was, however, equally a product of competition and rivalry among the *'ulamā'* themselves, a condition which al-Suyūṭī, with his scorn for his colleagues and controversial claim to be the "restorer of the age" (*mujaddid al-'aṣr*), did as much as anyone to foster.[80] It is important to remember that the *'ulamā'* were not a homogeneous lot, that there was much diversity and disagreement among them, as exemplified by the persistent controversy over the Ṣūfī poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ, discussed above. Altercations among the scholars were frequent, and generally resulted from a complex mixture of genuine doctrinal or ideological disputes and intense, sometimes vituperative personal or professional animosity. A figure such as the Syrian Ḥanbalī Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), who found himself in conflict with his academic colleagues and was hauled before the sultan on more than one occasion, created discord both with his stand on issues such as the literalness of Qur'ānic statements about God sitting on his throne, and also with his undeniably caustic and obstinate personality.[81] The disputes involving Ibn Taymiyya, though perhaps the most famous, were by no means unique for their intensity and color. In the late twelfth century, a Shāfi'ī jurist and poet named Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Kīzānī, who had a reputation for anthropomorphic beliefs, died and was buried next to the Imām al-Shāfi'ī. Three years after his death, an indignant Ash'arī theologian named Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī dug up the poet's bones and scattered them about, shouting that "a righteous believer [*ṣiddīq*] and a heretic [*zindīq*] should not be buried in the same place!"[82] Such altercations gave the ruling authorities an opportunity to intervene in matters which otherwise lay beyond their purview, as Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was forced to do in the matter of Ibn Taymiyya, and Qāytbāy in the controversy surrounding Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry.

More generally, the *'ulamā'* as a body represented an enormous range of outlook and accomplishment. Academic enterprise was of course concen-

[79] Garcin, "Histoire, opposition politique et piétisme traditionaliste," 70–71.

[80] On al-Suyūṭī's controversial claims, see Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, I, 61–71.

[81] Donald P. Little, "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?" *SI*, 41 (1975), 93–111; idem, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," *IJMES*, 4 (1973), 311–27.

[82] Leiser, "Hanbalism in Egypt," 165–66.

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trated in Cairo, but minor scholars, preachers and other religious figures could be found in every town, and provided an important channel for the transmission of Islamic learning and ideals to the Muslim Egyptian population beyond the metropolis. At the top of the pyramid were those prominent scholars of Islamic law, *ḥadīth* and the other religious sciences who held professorships at the many academic institutions, and from whose ranks were drawn the judges of the Islamic courts. Such scholars could amass considerable social prestige and power, for example, by acquiring multiple remunerative teaching appointments in which they could install their pupils as substitutes, or which they might transfer to their educated sons.[83] They represented, however, only a fraction of those who could claim to be, in some sense, an *'ālim* (a learned person, of which the plural is *'ulamā'*). The *'ulamā'* as a group were highly diverse, as a biographical dictionary such as Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī's comprehensive survey of fifteenth-century individuals makes clear.[84] They included a wide variety of minor legal and religious functionaries, such as notaries (*shāhids*), prayer leaders, and professional Qur'ān readers, as well as many bureaucrats and others for whom learning and the transmission of knowledge were more an avocation than a career. The structure of education, in particular the availability of stipends and accommodation for students in *madrasa*s and other institutions, allowed for a fair degree of social mobility, including, as we have seen, the integration of provincial residents into broader patterns of Muslim cultural life. Nonetheless, the diversity of the educated class also mirrors the range of cultural standards: from the cosmopolitanism of the more prominent scholars, whose numbers included many Syrians, Iranians and other foreigners, reflecting the genuinely international Sunnīculture of which Cairo was the center, to low-ranking stipendiaries of mosques, and religious figures of purely local stature whose contact with higher forms of Muslim learning was tangential and superficial.[85]

Part of what made that diversity possible was the flexible character of the transmission of knowledge. Just as the growth in the numbers of religio-academic institutions reflected a "widening of the social base of architectural patronage,"[86] so too did it expand the pool of Muslim Egyptians who had direct contact with, and even professional dependence on, religious and legal education. By the fifteenth century, the number of schools of higher education in Cairo alone numbered well over 100; primary schools must have been even more numerous. Moreover, endowed classes in jurisprudence

[83] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 107–27.

[84] *Al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'*, 12 vols. (Cairo, 1934).

[85] On these matters, see especially Petry, *Civilian Elite of Cairo*, passim.

[86] Oleg Grabar, "The Architecture of the Middle Eastern City from Past to Present: The Case of the Mosque," in Ira M. Lapidus (ed.), *Middle Eastern Cities* (Berkeley, 1969), 39.

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(*fiqh*) and other subjects became standard features, not only of *madrasa*s, but of mosques and Ṣūfī convents as well. Nonetheless, the structure of education remained informal and personal, and tied to oral transmission from, and the reputation of, individual teachers. There was no system of institutional degrees; what mattered was the *ijāza*, the attestation by a scholar that a particular student had studied a particular text, or acquired competence in a given field, under his (or her) direction. Since there was no limit to the number of *ijāza*s an individual might acquire, there was a tendency to collect as many as possible; *ijāza*s from older transmitters were especially valued, on the ground that, all things being equal, they would involve fewer links in the "chains of transmission" (*isnād*s) which led back to the original author of a text (or, in the case of *ḥadīth*, to the Prophet himself). The informality and personal nature of the transmission of knowledge, which has direct parallels in the bourgeois culture of commercial exchange, kept the learned class open and flexible, and drew into its ranks people from many different walks of life, including many Mamlūks, who were professional soldiers, not students, but who could nevertheless immerse themselves in the world of learning. Women in particular were able to take advantage of this flexibility to overcome the gender barriers which in theory separated them from most spheres of public life, and quite a number of them became respected transmitters of *ḥadīth*.[87]

There were few issues which so highlighted the diversity of status and opinion among the *'ulamā'*, and few which were so central to the religious culture of the late Middle Ages, as that of Ṣūfism. The various forms of Ṣūfī mysticism had engendered much controversy and hostility on the part of many legal scholars, but the later Middle Ages saw its triumph as the dominant form of Sunnī piety and religious experience. In Egypt, a representative figure is Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, born in Alexandria in the middle of the thirteenth century to a prominent family of jurists. Convinced by a Ṣūfī *shaykh* (master) that mysticism and the law did not exclude each other, he abandoned the hostility to Ṣūfism which he had absorbed from his father and grandfather, and taught both *fiqh* and *taṣawwuf* (Ṣūfī mysticism) at al-Azhar mosque in Cairo. He is best remembered as the author of a "breviary" which acquired enormous popularity, in large part because it avoided the extreme incarnationist terminology of controversial Ṣūfīs such as the theosophist Ibn 'Arabī, and spoke of God, and mankind's approach to him, in the direct language of the Qur'an.[88] To be sure, Ṣūfism remained controversial, to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond, as the controversy

[87] On these matters, see Jonathan P. Berkey, "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamlūk Period," in Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven, 1991), 143–57.

[88] Paul Nwyia, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (m. 709/1309) et la naissance de la confrérie šādilite* (Beirut, 1972).

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surrounding Ibn al-Fārid would indicate, and strict scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya vigorously attacked antinomian excesses in Ṣūfī doctrine and practice. On the other side, a Ṣūfī such as 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 1565) could scorn the jurists for their obsession with hair-splitting and convoluted argumentation, which ignored the needs of the common people and the spiritual message of Islam (although he, too, was critical of Ṣūfīs who contravened the law).[89] But the rapprochement of Ṣūfīsm and the juristic culture of the higher *'ulamā'* is one of the defining motifs of late medieval Egyptian society, and one which can be measured in various ways: for example, in the inclusion of a jurisprudence-based curriculum in the program of Ṣūfī convents, and a corresponding introduction of formal Ṣūfī practice into the institutional life of *madrasas*, and in the fact that Ibn Taymiyya himself turns out to have been a member of a Ṣūfī order.[90]

The Middle Ages saw a boom in the construction and endowment of Ṣūfī *khānqāhs*, along with *madrasas* and mosques, at the hands of sultans, Mamlūk amīrs, and other leading political and social figures. The most prominent among them were that established by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in Cairo (known as Sa'īd al-Su'adā'), and another constructed to the north of the capital at Siryāqūs by Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in the early fourteenth century, but they were supplemented by dozens of smaller convents providing meals, accommodation, and sometimes stipends to Ṣūfī adepts and masters. Increasingly, these institutions shed the role of providing a forum for spiritual retreat, and turned outward to integrate themselves into broader patterns of social and religious life, and in Cairo, for instance, were located in the central neighborhoods of the city.[91] A concurrent development, although an independent one, was the coalescence of Ṣūfii "orders" (*ṭā'ifas*), which represented paths of spiritual affiliation constructed around hierarchies tracing their authority to some revered eponymous founder, and which provided their members with opportunities for organized meditation and worship (usually built around the practice of *dhikr*, the repetitive oral "remembering" of God's name or other expressive formulae, or *samā'*, adoration through music). The leading historian of these *ṭā'ifas* saw their growth as a sign of decline in Ṣūfīsm, associated with institutionalization and the disappearance of intellectual originality,[92] but they also stand as an important measure of the spread of Ṣūfism among the Muslim population

[89] Points emphasized by Winter, *Society and Religion*, esp. 103–05, 230–36.

[90] George Makdisi, "Ibn Taimīya: a Ṣūfi of the Qādiriya Order," *American Journal of Arabic Studies*, 1 (1974), 118–29.

[91] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Change in Function and Form of Mamlūk Religious Institutions," *Annales islamologiques*, 21 (1985), 73–93; on *khānqāhs* generally, see Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamlūk Egypt: The Khanqah* (Berlin, 1988).

[92] J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), 70, 199–200.

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generally. In Egypt, as elsewhere, the orders were polymorphous. Some, such as the Shādhiliyya to which Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh belonged, were moderate and intellectual; they rejected asceticism in favor of an active engagement with society, both through secular occupations and preaching to the masses. Others skirted much more closely the beliefs and practices which the jurists feared and condemned; they included the most popular order in Egypt, the Aḥmadiyya, associated with the famous saint Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 1276), whose tomb shrine at Ṭanṭa in the Delta is still the object of veneration and pilgrimage. Nor were the orders mutually exclusive: al-Sha'rānī, for instance, belonged formally to as many as twenty-six orders.[93]

Just as many who were not professional scholars might identify themselves with the transmission of religious knowledge, so too did Ṣūfism reach broadly and deeply into the Muslim Egyptian population. It was popular among the Mamlūks, some of whom may have sensed an affinity between certain aspects of Ṣūfī practice and the shamanism of their central Asian homeland. Sultan al-Ghawrī, for instance, who held a low opinion of many scholars, at one point offering a lieutenant a reward for every drunken jurist he could find, nonetheless had a great respect for Ṣūfī mystics, and when he went to Syria to confront the Ottoman army in 1516, he took with him the head of the Aḥmadī order.[94] Women, too, participated in Ṣūfī rituals, sometimes in leading roles; the chronicles and biographical dictionaries record instances in which women were appointed "*shaykhas*" of hospices reserved for women, as well as several in which a woman succeeded her father or husband as director of a Ṣūfī institution serving, presumably, male adepts.[95]

More broadly, Ṣūfism functioned as a kind of social glue, tying the common people to more elevated forms of religious expression and the inhabitants of rural villages and towns to an urban-dominated cultural order. Mystical practice, at some level, attracted many if not most Muslims, including those who neither lived in a convent nor joined an order nor attached themselves closely to a particular *shaykh*, but who nonetheless found in *dhikr* or *samā'* a compelling outlet for their spiritual energies. One historian of late medieval religion has identified the appeal of Ṣūfism as its status as "the sphere of Islam where a ruler, an *'ālim*, or a commoner could request a personal, or at least a partially creative and active participation in religion."[96] At the lowest social levels, the impact of Ṣūfism is inevitably

[93] On the orders generally, see Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, passim, and Winter, *Society and Religion*, 88–149.

[94] Winter, *Society and Religion*, 19–20, 100.

[95] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, III, 237; Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 173–75, esp. 175 n. 50; Winter, *Society and Religion*, 130–31; 'Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme aux temps des mamlouks*, 72–75.

[96] Winter, *Society and Religion*, 29; cf. Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge, 1993), 9–22.

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more difficult to trace, but organized mysticism may have taken root even among the rabble known as the *ḥarāfish*, whose poverty identified with and brought out the asceticism latent in Ṣūfī thought.[97] In rural areas in particular, well-known Ṣūfīs emerged as religious leaders and transmitters of Islam to the peasants and small-townsmen. Links to Cairo and the religious currents there were maintained through education, itinerant mystics, and the *ḥajj*. Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), the eponymous founder of the Shādhilī order, in his repeated performances of the pilgrimage seems to have preferred the more arduous route through Qūṣ and thence to ʿAydhāb, rather than the shorter route to the Red Sea from Cairo, and his disciples, in imitation of the master, often followed suit; the contacts with the Ṣaʿīd which they maintained as a result were of great importance in strengthening the Shādhilī order there.[98] Rural Ṣūfīs who acquired an education and training in Cairo often returned to their home towns and villages, where they supplemented their religious functions such as leading prayer and intercession by filling other compelling social needs: as scribes (copying Qur'āns and other texts for the illiterate villagers), notaries (witnessing wedding contracts), schoolmasters, and occasionally as mediators between the population and the political authorities.[99]

Mediation between native Egyptians and the ruling elite was, in fact, a structural need of the Mamlūk system, one that could be fulfilled by both *ʿulamā'* and Ṣūfīs, or by individuals who were both. The *ʿulamā'*, including the *qāḍīs* and other leading legal scholars, were especially useful when the issue touched on matters of the *sharīʿa*, as when the sultan attempted to raise cash through extra taxation on merchants or religious endowments.[100] But the *ʿulamā'* were also compromised by their own reliance on the Mamlūks, as patrons and as endowers of the institutions from which much of their income and status derived, so that increasingly the role of mediator fell to the Ṣūfīs. This social and political function was linked to the spread, especially in the fifteenth century, of less monumental Ṣūfī institutions, usually known as *zāwiya*s, often little more than neighborhood mosques associated with particular *shaykh*s, and more likely to be independent of patronage by the wealthy and powerful.[101] Revered Ṣūfī *shaykh*s often came

[97] Brinner, "The Significance of the *Ḥarāfish*," 204–06, 210–11.

[98] Garcin, *Un centre musulman*, 312–21.

[99] Jean-Claude Garcin, "Histoire et hagiographie de l'Égypte musulmane à la fin de l'époque mamelouke et au début de l'époque ottomane," in *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron*, vol. 2: *Égypte post-pharaonique* (Cairo, 1979), 290–300.

[100] See the incidents cited in Carl F. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, 1994), 166–68; on the *ʿulamā'* as intermediaries more generally, see Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 130–41.

[101] Leonor Fernandes, "The *Zāwiya* in Cairo," *AI*, 18 (1982), 116–21; idem, "Some Aspects of the *Zāwiya* in Egypt at the Eve of the Ottoman Conquest," *AI*, 19 (1983), 9–17.

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into conflict with the military elite, as defenders of the local population and their interests, and thereby exercised a certain influence over political processes which were formally the exclusive concern of the ruling authorities.[102] Ṣūfīs may not necessarily have sought such a social and political role: the popular shaykh and powerful intercessor Abu'l-Su'ūd al-Jāriḥī once lamented to al-Sha'rānī that in his thirty-seven years as a Ṣūfī, no one had come to him asking for guidance on how to reach God, or how to repent of sins; instead they had sought remedy from more worldly complaints: "he who had quit the world saw it flow back towards him."[103] But circumstances cast them in this role, not least the fearful respect in which many Mamlūks held them.

Through Ṣūfism we reach the bottom of the social scale. Naturally less is known about the working and poorer classes, let alone rural society, but the sources reveal enough to allow some speculation about their relationship to the broader social and cultural order which we have been tracing. Certainly for many of those in the lower ranks, life was precarious and often miserable. As elsewhere in the Middle Ages, a large portion of a poor family's budget was spent on bread; 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 1231–2), an Iraqi physician who settled in Egypt, reports that their diet was supplemented primarily with dates, figs, fish, cheese, and (in the countryside, at least) fieldmice and snakes.[104] Attempts to quantify the misery and misfortune of the poor are difficult, but it is clear that the rampant inflation and periodic shortages of foodstuffs which plagued the Egyptian economy in the later Middle Ages took an especially heavy toll on the more vulnerable members of society. Crisis might be brought on by natural forces, such as a low Nile flood or a wave of pestilence. "This is the Almighty's customary treatment of His creatures," wrote al-Maqrīzī; "whenever they disobey Him and violate His divine law, He calls down a calamity upon them as a punishment for their actions."[105] But al-Maqrīzī had served as *muḥtasib*, and as such had been responsible for overseeing the distribution of grain in Cairo; he accurately perceived that the food shortages which plagued Egypt in the early fifteenth century were more the product of human actions and political decisions, including excessive taxation, failure to maintain the irrigation system, and debasement of the coinage. These calamities brought on the death of most of the peasants, he reported (with some exaggeration);

[102] See, for example, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, V, 110–13.

[103] Jean-Claude Garcin, "Deux saints populaires du Caire au début du XVI[e] siècle," *BEO*, 29 (1977), 134–36.

[104] 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-ifāda wa'l-i'tibār fi'l-umūr al-mushāhada wa'l-ḥawādith al-mu'āyana bi-arḍ miṣr* (Cairo, 1869 [?]), 43, trans. S. de Sacy, *Relation de l'Égypte* (Paris, 1810), 314–15; Eliyahu Ashtor, "The Diet of Salaried Classes in the Medieval Near East," *Journal of Asian History*, 4 (1970), 12, 19.

[105] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ighāthat al-umma*, 41; Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 50.

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more interestingly, he noted that the rise in prices had wiped out the purchasing power of the "stipendiaries," such as the students and minor functionaries at mosques, *madrasa*s and *khānqāh*s, whose stipends were fixed by the deeds of endowment for their institutions, and who therefore were "either dead or wishing death because of the calamity that has befallen them."[106]

Despite their at least potential misery, the common people and the poor were integrated into the social, cultural and even the political order. Artisans and craftsmen, in their relations with each other and with their customers, shared many of the same values and operated in much the same way as bourgeois merchants. As in higher social and economic circles, the hallmarks were flexibility, freedom and personal relationships. With a few exceptions, notably sugar and paper, most industries were organized in small workshops rather than large factories. Partnership was the normal form of industrial cooperation, rather than employment; these partnerships were characterized by a significant degree of freedom of contract, and often produced strong and lasting relationships, stronger in some cases than the ties of family.[107] In general the common people lacked institutional or organizational structures – guilds, for instance – which could effectively represent their interests. As a result, the most common form of expression for their frustrations and grievances was the spontaneous outburst of violence, as in riots. The imprecision of mob violence as a political idiom left the masses open to manipulation by both Mamlūks, in their incessant internecine feuds, and religious leaders. But there was also method in the madness, and urban disruptions could express, however crudely, public feeling on issues ranging from the legitimacy of some particular Mamlūk's claim to the sultanate, to impatience with the government's manipulation of the grain supply and the frequent corruption of those officials (especially the *muḥtasib*) charged with overseeing it.[108]

In the cultural sphere, the common people were not only integrated into the overarching Islamic order, but helped to define it. As we have stressed, the openness and flexibility of the educational system permitted the participation, on some level, of various marginal groups, such as Mamlūks and women; the same was true of the common people, who might also earn *ijāzas* and thereby acquire some stake, however minimal and symbolic, in the transmission of knowledge and the religious order.[109] Cultural transmission was not a one-way street, however, with the ideas and principles of the higher-ranking *'ulamā'* and leading Ṣūfīs trickling down in some attenuated

[106] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ighāthat al-umma*, 75; Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 75.
[107] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 80–99.
[108] Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, 52–66; see also Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 143–84.
[109] Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 201–14.

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form to those of lower social rank. Although it is difficult to recover, given the cultural bias of literary sources produced mainly by the academic elite, it is possible to identify a sphere of cultural activity in which the common people – non-scholars – participated as autonomous actors. For instance, despite criticism from the jurists, Muslim Egyptians participated eagerly in the Coptic festival of Nawrūz, a carnivalesque celebration of the new agricultural cycle characterized by excessive eating and drinking, the exchange of gifts, and games and masquerades designed to blur political and gender hierarchies. Although the repeated condemnation of the legal scholars and the obliging edicts of the secular authorities had probably eliminated its public celebration in Cairo by the early fifteenth century, it survived much longer elsewhere in the country, notably in Upper Egypt.[110] On a rather different level, street theater and the popular shadow plays afforded an opportunity for satire and biting social criticism: Ibn al-Ḥājj, for example, described a skit popular with the common people in which the actors lampooned the pretensions of the *qāḍīs* by parading about in oversized turbans and pompous clothing.[111]

The important point, however, is not that the common people had a culture of their own, but that medieval Egyptian culture was a complex tableau consisting of interlocking and overlapping strata, and drawing upon the experiences and insights of Muslims from a variety of different social levels. This becomes apparent from a review of the extensive literature produced in this period which condemned the practice by Muslims of "innovations" (*bida'*), customs and habits which contravened the *sunna* of the Prophet. This polemic was not, of course, peculiar to medieval Egypt, but this society did produce a considerable number of such treatises. Two matters, in particular, concerned the scholars who produced them. One was that certain popular mechanisms for the transmission of religious knowledge, values and culture to the common people, such as unregulated preaching and storytelling, were deceptively similar to "higher" channels, threatening to contaminate the "knowledge" which the masses acquired.[112] But a second was that popular and (in a strict sense) innovative practices were themselves working their way into the fabric of what was accepted, even by many scholars, as "Islam." Perhaps the most prominent example of this tendency was the *ziyārat al-qubūr*, the organized visitation of tombs of

[110] Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 40–51.

[111] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal al-shar' al-sharīf*, I, 146; on the shadow plays, see M. M. Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Dāniyāl," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 13 (1982), 83–107, and Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl, *Three Shadow Plays*, ed. Paul Kahle (Cambridge, 1992).

[112] See Jonathan P. Berkey, "Tradition, Innovation, and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East," *Past & Present*, 146 (1995), 38–65.

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pious saints and other venerated folk.[113] The huge cemetery to the south and east of Cairo, known as the Qarāfa, held a vast number of tombs venerated by the Muslim population, and dominated the religious imagination of many Cairenes; but hardly any region of the country was without its own graves of local saints. Indeed, the visitation of tombs is a practice of profound antiquity in Egypt, and jurists such as Ibn al-Ḥājj and Ibn Taymiyya were no doubt correct to question its place in Islam. But what was especially troubling was that the practice seemed to have worked its way into the fabric of Islam in medieval Egypt, in the identification of numerous tombs with various heroes of early Islamic history, thereby claiming a space for the *ziyāra* in the religion's "sacred history," and also in the support it received from prominent religious and legal scholars, such as Taqi'l-Dīn al-Subkī, who wrote a treatise defending the practice.

The cultic visitation of tombs is a fitting place to end this survey, for it brings together the various social strata in a practice which demonstrates the diversity and fluidity of late medieval Egyptian culture. The richness of that culture was a product of many factors, of which the most important were: Egypt's role as a fulcrum of international trade; the presence of an active and engaged ruling elite which, for all its "otherness," effectively identified its own interests with those of the country; and the vigor of the country's network of religious institutions and Cairo's position as the undisputed center of Islamic learning. Those factors did not disappear immediately upon the Ottoman conquest of the country in 1517, but they were seriously, and irretrievably, undermined. From this point on, Egyptian society was tied to imperial Ottoman politics and was increasingly vulnerable to global economic developments, so that its culture grew dependent upon foreign taste.

[113] See Christopher S. Taylor, "The Cult of the Saints in Late Medieval Egypt" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1989), and idem, "Sacred History and the Cult of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt," *The Muslim World*, 80 (1990), 72–80. See also Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taimiya's Struggle Against Popular Religion* (The Hague, 1976).

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15

Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk epochs

DONALD P. LITTLE

As is evident from other chapters of this volume it would be artificial and misleading to try to separate the history of Islamic Egypt from that of its neighbors, especially Syria and Palestine. After all, the geopolitical situation of Egypt throughout the Middle Ages dictated both the necessity to defend its right flank from encroachments by rival powers in Syria and, to a lesser extent, Mesopotamia, and to secure its commercial interests in the Mediterranean through control of the ports of the Levant. These geopolitical factors were not of course peculiar to the Islamic period and are recurring themes of both ancient and modern times. That being the case, it is not surprising that it is also impractical to confine the historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods to writing about Egypt alone or to those composed by Egyptian authors. Although historians resident in Egypt became more and more prominent in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and an Egyptian group of writers flourished in Cairo during the fifteenth century, for the whole of the Ayyūbid period, Syrian and Mesopotamian authors dominated what was recorded about Egypt. Since, moreover, the Egyptian Ayyūbid sultans, including Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, were involved with building and maintaining an empire with its capital in Cairo but including Syria, Palestine, and other territories, there is no history focusing on Ayyūbid Egypt per se, so that it must be studied as a part of Ayyūbid history in general.

Nevertheless, before examining the historiography of each era separately, it should be useful to ask whether the two periods have any features in common. From the point of view of historiographical genres, the answer is simple: the classical forms of Arabic historical writing were maintained by both Ayyūbid and Mamlūk writers, most notably chronicles and biographies (including biographies of individual personages and biographical dictionaries), but also administrative manuals, though the latter were not used with the same frequency and consistency in both periods. In general, then, the external forms of historiography are marked by conservatism, as is the

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content, which deals by and large with the activities of the political elites at their courts, in diplomacy, and on battlefields, along with the roles of intellectuals, including religious scholars and mystics, but also the literati, in the life of the times. To a great extent this element of conservatism can be explained by the fact that the historians of both periods had similar backgrounds and were formed by similar influences. Although important exceptions will be noted for the Mamlūk period, basically two types of historians dominated the field for almost 350 years: officials, mainly bureaucrats of both high and low rank, who had access to rulers and/or official documents, and religious scholars, that is *'ulamā'*. The two groups were certainly not mutually exclusive, for most if not all of the former would have had some exposure in the course of their education to the art and science of *ḥadīth* and its transmitters, which continued to influence scholarly historiography from its inception to the time in question. On the other hand many of the *'ulamā'* served in some official capacity or another associated with judicial institutions.

But despite the maintenance of the centuries-old Arabic traditions governing the forms of historical discourse, the historians of our periods have other distinctive characteristics in common. This at least is one thesis, in which it is argued that from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries a new type of historiography developed and flourished, namely "*siyasa*-oriented historiography,"[1] that is to say historiography without the degree of concern for epistemological and theological implications that had characterized previous works, and with increased emphasis on issues related to the governance of Muslim states. This new orientation, culminating in the Mamlūk "imperial bureaucratic chronicle," resulted in increased reliance on archives and records of various kinds, in an effort not just to lend authenticity to the historical narrative but to expand the subject matter of history to include economic and social processes.[2] Concomitantly, interest in biography became more and more pervasive as historians scrutinized the lives of the governing class and their extended entourages in order to delve more deeply into the day-to-day workings of medieval Muslim principalities. In this respect the *'ulamā'* figure more prominently in the chronicles than had previously been the case, reflecting the fact that the ruling military oligarchies, beginning with the Seljuks but continuing under the Ayyubids and especially the Mamlūks, seeking legitimacy through the support of intellectuals, spent enormous sums on their salaries and patronage, sometimes in return for specific services to the court but often for their function as devotional and educational intermediaries with the public. In addition to the proliferation of biographical works, it has been noted that historians

[1] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), 184.
[2] Ibid., 183.

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frequently inserted autobiographical remarks in their narratives, sometimes in the form of moral pronouncements on the conduct of the rulers and their supporters, but more often as casual personal observations. In this respect the emphasis of the bureaucrat historians on *siyāsa* inevitably produced a reaction from historians who deplored the usurpation, both in theory and practice, of the supremacy of the *sharī'a* in governing and maintaining the state, and advocated a return to it as a remedy for the ills of society.[3]

A final general point needs to be stressed. As is the case with Muslim historiography from the beginning up until the Ottomans in their heyday, virtually no archives have survived. As noted above, historians did occasionally make use of them and sometimes reproduced documents in their texts; it is also true that fragments of chancery and judicial institutions have survived, especially from the Mamlūk period, which historians have recently begun to put to good use.[4] But the fact remains that our knowledge of both Ayyubid and Mamlūk history is based mainly on literary sources. In the following pages only the most important of these will be surveyed.

The historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and their successors

Given the renown of the founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty in the east and the west, it is not surprising that the sources for his life and career are numerous and that these have been extensively studied by western scholars. As a result of the research of H. A. R. Gibb and others the character of these works and their interrelationship are probably as well known as any for the medieval period of Arabic historiography.[5] Basically there are four major authors, one of whom, Ibn al-Athīr, can be classified as a scholar historian, while the others were bureaucrats.

'Izz al-Dīn 'Alī ibn al-Athīr (555–630/1160–1233), a contemporary of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, was born and raised in a small town north of Mosul; in this area he was educated, primarily as a student of *ḥadīth*. Apparently he never held a professional position but remained a private scholar all his life, although he is said to have received the patronage of the atabegs of Mosul and Aleppo. He is also known to have been with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's army in an unknown capacity on one or more campaigns against the crusaders in Syria.[6] Although Ibn al-Athīr edited two works related to the science of tradition, his fame rests on his two

[3] *Ibid.*, 200–02.

[4] For references see D. Little, "The Use of Documents for the Study of Mamluk History," *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 1 (1997), 6–12.

[5] See H. A. R. Gibb, "The Arabic sources for the Life of Saladin," *Speculum*, 25 (1950), 58–72, and other works cited below.

[6] D. Richards, "Ibn al-Athīr and the Later Parts of the *Kāmil*: A Study of Aims and Methods," in D. Morgan (ed.), *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds* (London, 1982), 77.

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histories. His voluminous universal history, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rīkh* (*The Perfection of History*), which begins with the Creation and runs to 628/1231, was celebrated by his contemporary Ibn Khallikān "as one of the best productions of its kind."[7] In modern times, Ibn al-Athīr has been acclaimed on the basis of this work as "the only real Arab historian of the period" and "the chief historian of the later crusades."[8] For the events prior to his own lifetime Ibn al-Athīr depended most notably on al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* (*History of the Prophets and Kings*), which he used freely. Besides passages borrowed from works that have not survived in their original form, *al-Kāmil* is interesting primarily for the events of Ibn al-Athīr's own lifetime and the years immediately preceding it, for which he could draw on reports from his father and other eyewitnesses, as well as written sources. These sources are unidentified more often than not. This reluctance to name his sources consistently seems odd for a scholar with training in *ḥadīth* and has been explained as a conscious attempt "to free himself from the Traditionist method followed by his favorite historian, al-Ṭabarī, and by his contemporary Ibn 'Asākir."[9] Ibn al-Athīr's second history, *al-Bāhir fī Ta'rīkh Atābakāt al-Mawṣil* (*The Dazzling History of the Atabegs of Mosul*), is a local history of the Zengids but includes information on their relations with Egypt. It surveys the years 477–607/1084–1210 and thus covers a century and a quarter recorded also in *al-Kāmil*. Given the fact that the author enjoyed the favor of the Atabegs of Mosul, it is natural that he eulogized them in both of his works and deprecated their enemies, most notably Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn himself. Accordingly in most circles he is regarded as a prejudicial and unreliable source for the career of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. More damaging to Ibn al-Athīr's reputation as a historian is Gibb's finding that he relied heavily, even for contemporary events, on the work of his fellow historian 'Imād al-Dīn, rewriting his reports "with an occasional twist or admixture of fiction,"[10] and reminding his readers of God's direction of human affairs.

The main value of Ibn al-Athīr's two histories rests on his account of the period following Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death. In fact, for the reign of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's nephew, al-Malik al-Kāmil, as sultan of Egypt and Syria (615–35/1218–38), Ibn al-Athīr has been characterized as "the soundest basis of our knowledge."[11] Nevertheless, even for earlier periods he was regarded

[7] *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary Translated from the Arabic by Baron MacGuckin de Slane*, 2 (Paris and London, 1843), 289.

[8] F. Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), xxvii, xxviii.

[9] M. Ahmad, "Some Notes on Arabic Historiography during the Zengid and Ayyubid periods (521/1127–648/1250)," in B. Lewis and P. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), 90.

[10] H. A. R. Gibb, "The Achievement of Saladin," in Yusuf Ibish (ed.), *Studies in Islamic History* (Beirut, 1974), 159.

[11] H. Gottschalk, *Al-Malik al-Kāmil von Egypten und seine Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1948), 6.

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as authoritative by the many later historians who borrowed from him, including Abū al-Fidā', Ibn Kathīr, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Khaldūn.

Like Ibn al-Athīr, Bahā' al-Dīn ibn Shaddād (539–632/1145–1235) was a native of Mesopotamia and was educated there as a scholar; unlike Ibn al-Athīr, he held various professional appointments as *madrasa* professor, diplomat of the Zangids of Mosul, and judge. Under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn he held an important position as *Qāḍī al-'Askar* (Judge of the Army). After Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death Ibn Shaddād served the sultan's surviving sons in Aleppo, one of whom, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, appointed him Shāfi'ī judge of that city. On the basis of his five-year experience in the company of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Ibn Shaddād composed a biographical study of the sultan, *al-Nawādir al-Sulṭāniyya wa-al-Maḥāsin al-Yūsufiyya* (*Royal Anecdotes and Joseph-like Virtues*). The work is considered to be a sober and authoritative portrait of the sultan despite the author's patent admiration for his subject. In form it is not a conventional biography, being divided into the two parts reflected in the title. The first section is devoted to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's virtues, wherein Yūsuf (i.e. Joseph), refers not only to the sultan's given name (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf) but evokes associations with the biblical Joseph's career in Egypt. In a series of chapters, each beginning with a *ḥadīth* or a verse from the Qur'an in order to link Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's life with the Prophet Muḥammad's, Ibn Shaddād delineates the sultan's merits, such as justice, generosity, courage, militant zeal, steadfastness, humaneness, and so on. Appropriate anecdotes to illustrate Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's embodiment of Muslim heroic virtues are narrated in the form of the author's eyewitness accounts. Here Ibn Shaddād's purpose is not just to eulogize the ideal ruler but also to establish Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as an exemplar worthy of his subjects' emulation. In the second part the author turns to a record of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's career from his foray into Egypt in 559/1164 until his death in 589/1193. Although the organization of this section is chronological, it is not annalistic. The most valuable segment is inevitably that covering the years when Ibn Shaddād was in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's service. The work is regarded as an authentic record of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's deeds during the Third Crusade, thanks largely to Ibn Shaddād's close, but not fawning, relationship with the sultan.[12]

Two other historians enjoyed Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's confidence as official members of his retinue. The first of these, 'Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kātib al-Isfāhānī (519–597/1125–1201), is unique as the only non-Arab historian of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Born in Isfahan and reared in Kashan, he received a *madrasa* education in Sāljuk Baghdad and later taught jurisprudence there under the patronage of the Zangid Sultan Nūr al-Dīn. After the death of Nūr al-Dīn, 'Imād al-Dīn fell out of official favor for a short time but regained it in 570/1175 when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, campaigning in northern Syria, responded to a

[12] Gabrieli, *Arab Historians*, xxix.

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poem written by 'Imād al-Dīn in his honor by appointing him as a deputy scribe (*kātib*) to al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, a high official in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's service, and, coincidentally, the second "official" historian alluded to above. In this capacity 'Imād al-Dīn drafted much official correspondence on behalf of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and gained close and frequent access to the sultan and affairs of state. Both the correspondence and 'Imād al-Dīn's first-hand knowledge figure prominently in his two histories: *al-Fatḥ al-Qussī fī al-Fatḥ al-Qudsī* (*Eloquent Rhetoric on the Conquest of Jerusalem*) and *al-Barq al-Shāmī* (*Syrian Lightning*). Both works are written in a highly ornate (possibly Persianate) style of rhymed prose that embellishes, indeed often obscures, a careful record of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's political activities and military campaigns. *Al-Fatḥ* begins with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's conquest of Jerusalem in 583/1187, because, the author says, this event opens a new era in Islamic history and thus constitutes a new *hijra* "of more lasting significance than the first."[13] It ends with Saladin's death. Though most of the seven volumes of *al-Barq* are lost, it is a broader work than *al-Fatḥ*, containing a valuable autobiographical record of 'Imād al-Dīn's service under two sultans, Nūrd al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, beginning in 562/1166. Besides their stylistic virtuosity, both works are remarkable as melanges of factual narrative, personal observations, and official documents. Both Ibn al-Athīr and the later historian Abū Shāma among others borrowed extensively from 'Imād al-Dīn; Abū Shāma, in fact, abridged *al-Barq* and in the process stripped away its rhetorical excesses.

As already noted, 'Abd al Raḥmān ibn 'Alī al-'Asqalānī al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (529–596/1135–1200) was also a prominent official under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, more prominent in fact than the other "official" historian of his reign. Born in Ascalon, he must have had a traditional scholarly education but served an apprenticeship in the Fāṭimid chancery in Cairo and eventually became its director; in this position he caught the attention of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn when the latter assumed the wazīrate there. Of all this historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil was best situated to observe events in Egypt, not least because he acted as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's administrative deputy for two years and later returned there after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death to serve under al-Malik al-'Azīz. Unfortunately, given al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil's close association with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his access to official documents, many of which he himself wrote, his work has not survived except in extracts preserved by other historians. This is true of his *Rasā'il* (*Epistles*) as well as his *Mutajaddidāt* (*Diaries*); nevertheless, these extracts are sufficient in Gibb's opinion to establish al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil in some respects as "the most valuable of all [the historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn] ..." since his works "... reflect some at least of

[13] Cited by Khalidi, *Historical Thought*, 82; cf. D. Richards, "'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī: Administrator, Litterateur and Historian," in Maya Shatzmiller (ed.), *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria* (Leiden, 1993), 144.

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Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's real purposes and ideals."[14] Be that as it may, it should be noted that as a professional scribe, his works are also marked by rhetorical embellishments, though not to the same extent as 'Imād al-Dīn's.

Three historians might be considered as transitional inasmuch as their works cover both the late Ayyūbid and early Mamlūk periods; for the former, these histories are heavily indebted to the historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in both form and content. *Mir'āt al-Zamān fi Ta'rīkh al-A'yān* (*Mirror of the Time as Reflected in the History of Notables*) by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (581–654/1185–1256), like Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil*, is a universal history; it begins with the Creation and ends with the year of the author's death. Trained originally as a Ḥanbalī scholar but converted to Ḥanafism under the influence of his patron, the Sultan al-Malik al-Mu'aẓẓam 'Īsā of Damascus, Ibn al-Jawzī shows considerably greater interest in the biographies of *'ulamā'* than did his predecessors. But the *Mir'āt* is regarded mainly as a reworking of the histories of 'Imād al-Dīn, Ibn Shaddād, and others, supplemented by his own first-hand observations. For the years of his own lifetime the work is significant for its focus on the role of Damascus in late Ayyūbid history.[15] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Abū Shāma (599–665/1203–68), another Damascene scholar, is known primarily for his *al-Rawḍatayn fi Akhbār al-Dawlatayn* (*Two Gardens of Reports on Two Reigns*), a chronicle of the reigns of Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, based on the standard sources. A sequel, *al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawḍatayn*, again focuses on events in Damascus as observed by his sources, Ibn al-Jawzī, and eyewitness informants, including himself. Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil (604–97/1208–98), though also a scholar trained in Syria, has the distinction of occasional residence in Cairo, where he had access to the courts of both Ayyubid and Mamlūk sultans. In fact, Sultan Baybars sent him as an envoy to King Manfred of Sicily, but Ibn Wāṣil returned to his birthplace in Hama around 663/1264 as a *qāḍī* and remained there until his death.[16] There he wrote his most important historical work, the annalistic *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fi Akhbār Banī Ayyūb* (*The Dissipater of Anxieties about Reports on the Ayyūbids*). One scholar has characterized the work as a reflection of the author's "desire to portray the house of Ayyūb as a kind of ideal Muslim dynasty;"[17] another has deemed it to be "the most important source for the later Ayyūbids."[18] Nevertheless, the *Mufarrij* has been shown to be based

[14] Gibb, "Achievement," 161, 162.

[15] R. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany, 1977), 395.

[16] G. Schregle, *Die Sultanin von Ägypten: Šağarat ad-Durr in der arabischen Geschichtsschreibung und Literatur* (Wiesbaden, 1961), 12.

[17] Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 396.

[18] H. Halm, "Quellen und Literatur: IV. Die Ayyubiden," in U. Haarmann (ed.), *Geschichte der arabischen Welt* (Munich, 1987), 639.

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largely on Abū Shāma and his sources, including Ibn al-Athīr, until the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and thereafter, when Ibn Wāṣil's own observations come into play.[19] His experience in Egypt enabled him to write authoritatively about the replacement of the Ayyūbids by the Mamlūks, and his account of the career of Queen Shajar al-Durr was used freely and extensively by later historians.[20]

Besides the chronicles and royal biographies, there were other genres of historiography cultivated under the Ayyūbids which are useful to historians such as biographical dictionaries, the best known being *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa-Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān* (*Obituaries of Notables and News of the Prominent Men of the Time*) by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khallikān (608–81/1211–82). This is, of course, another transitional work, since Ibn Khallikān flourished during the early Mamlūk period, and served, in fact, as Shāfi'ī *qāḍī* in Cairo and Damascus under various Mamlūk sultans. While the book contains some 3,600 biographies of prominent Muslims who lived from the earliest times, the most valuable ones are those few who were the author's contemporaries, both politicians and intellectuals.

Hardly any documents of Ayyūbid provenance have survived other than a handful of decrees preserved at St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai.[21] Therefore the chancery and other administrative manuals of the period are of particular value, especially since the authors of the extant works were all Egyptians and served as officials in the Ayyūbid bureaucracy. Most prominent was the Copt al-As'ad ibn Mammātī (542–606/1147–1209), secretary of government financial bureaus under the first two Ayyūbid sultans of Egypt and author of *Qawānīn al-Dawāwīn* (*Rules for the Bureaux*). This work contains invaluable data on the economic life of Egyptian villages under Sultan 'Azīz, complete with a cadastral survey. His contemporary, the Shāfi'ī *qāḍī* 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Makhzūmī, was also a bureaucrat in the late Fāṭimid and early Ayyūbid fisc. Drawing on his experience as an expert on taxes, he wrote a manual for the use of other tax officers, entitled *al-Minhāj fī 'Ilm al-Kharāj* (*Methodology of Land Taxation*). Although the book has survived only in fragments, these contain useful information on commerce with the Italian city states and other economic matters.[22] Still another Ayyūbid administrative manual was written by Abū 'Uthmān al-Nābulusī (588–660/1192–1261), who served in administrative capacities under sultans al-Kāmil and al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. To the latter he dedicated his administrative handbook, *Luma' al-Qawānīn al-Muḍi'a fī Dawāwīn al-Diyār al-*

[19] Ahmad, "Notes," 95.

[20] G. Schregle, *Die Sultanin*, 12.

[21] See A. Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai* (Baltimore, 1955); cf. S. Stern, "Petitions from the Ayyūbid Period," *BSOAS*, 27 (1964), 1–32.

[22] Conveniently organized by Claude Cahen, *Makhzūmiyyāt: études sur l'histoire économique et financière de l'Égypte médiévale* (Leiden, 1957).

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Miṣriyya (*Bright Light on the Rules of the Egyptian Bureaux*). As will be seen below, works designed for chancery clerks became more elaborate and comprehensive during the Mamlūk period.

Mamlūk historiography

With the establishment of the Mamlūk dynasty following the murder of the last Ayyūbid sultan of Egypt in 648/1250 and the short, curious reign of Shajar al-Durr as Queen of the Muslims, the surviving Ayyūbid historians from Syria continued to record political events of the ruling circles in Egypt. Generally, a pro-Ayyūbid attitude is evident in their narratives, since more often than not they had been in the employ of the overthrown rulers. Such a bias can be discerned, for example, when both Ibn Wāṣil and Abū Shāma describe the murder of Turān Shāh and the career of Shajar al-Durr and her consort Aybak with "antipathy toward the Mamlūks who came to power in Egypt."[23] But the Mamlūks soon found their own historians; these, almost without exception during the Baḥrī period (648–784/1250–1382) took a decidedly favorable attitude toward the ruling elite. This is particularly true of the historians who held official positions in the bureaucracy or the army, both in Egypt and in Syria. Here it should be noted that the Mamlūks gave Egypt, Palestine, and Syria a much more pervasive political, economic, and cultural unity than the Ayyūbids had been able to achieve. As a result, even the Syrian historians – scholars for the most part, affiliated with the religious establishment – surpassed their Ayyūbid predecessors in the attention they devoted to affairs in Egypt. In this respect, however, it is curious that Egyptian historians often borrowed heavily from the Syrians, even for reports on events in Egypt.

In addition to the historians of traditional background, be it scholarly or bureaucratic, a new breed flourished under the Mamlūks – historians closely associated with the Mamlūk military institution either as fully-fledged soldiers or as sons of Mamlūks. Although these new historians continued to write in the conventional literary forms – chronicles, biographies, and administrative handbooks – their lack of a rigorous academic training is betrayed by their Arabic prose, which is permeated with colloquialisms. Concomitant with a relaxation of linguistic and literary standards was the use by some historians, including *'ulamā'*, of devices designed to enhance the readability of their works, perhaps in an attempt to entertain or even titillate an expanding, more diversified market for history. Still another trend can be seen in the increased attention given to biography in various forms, to the extent that the space given to obituary notices in chronicles often outweighs the pages devoted to annals. Nevertheless, Mamlūk historiography is so

[23] G. Schregle, *Die Sultanin*, 12–13.

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variegated and voluminous that it is difficult to make any generalization about more than just a few works or to find any that would apply to the solitary genius of Ibn Khaldūn. That being the case, the focus will again be on representative historians, chosen primarily on the basis of their originality as primary sources.

Baḥrī historians

Typical of the bureaucrat historians of the Baḥrī period are Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir; his nephew, Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī; and ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaddād al-Ḥalabī. Of the three, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir (620–92/1223–92), a Cairene with a conventional religious education, was undoubtedly the most prominent as confidential secretary (Kātib al-Sirr) and head of chancery (Ṣāḥib Dīwān al-Inshāʾ) under three sultans: Baybars, Qalāwūn, and al-Ashraf Khalīl. During their reigns he wrote numerous royal documents for both domestic and foreign distribution, including letters of appointment, treaties, and diplomatic correspondence. In drafting these he is said to have adopted al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil as his guide.[24] But his major work, *al-Rawḍ al-Ẓāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir* (*The Splendid Garden Concerning the Life of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir*), was probably inspired by Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād's biography of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, *al-Nawādir*, in that each devoted special sections to a eulogistic enumeration of his subject's merits in an attempt to depict him as an exemplary – and in the case of Baybars, a legitimate – Muslim ruler.[25] But the *Rawḍ* goes a step further in the direction of praise for the sultan: not only was the work known to have been commissioned by Baybars; it was read to him by the author for his approval. In effect it is an official biography with the propagandist aspects which that term implies; indeed, it has been characterized as "almost a ghosted autobiography."[26] Still, thanks to the author's official position and his access to the sultan, the work is an invaluable source and was regarded as such both by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir's contemporaries and by later historians. He also wrote biographies in the same vein for his subsequent masters. For Qalāwūn, this was *Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa al-ʿUṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr* (*The Glorious Days and Times of the Life of al-Malik al-Manṣūr*). Although the first part of this work has not survived, the extant portion is again informed by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir's first-hand knowledge of events at home and abroad, for he continued to travel as envoy for Qalāwūn, as he had for Baybars. As far as is known from a short extant fragment, the same is true of

[24] *EI*2, III, 679.

[25] P. Holt, "Three Biographies of al-Ẓāhir Baybars," in D. Morgan (ed.), *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds* (London, 1982), 23.

[26] P. Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P. Holt (London and New York, 1992), 270.

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Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir's biography of al-Ashraf Khalīl: *al-Alṭāf al-Khafiyya min al-Sīra al-Sharīfa al-Sulṭāniyya al-Malakiyya al-Ashrafiyya* (*Unseen Benevolences in the Noble Life of al-Sultān al-Ashraf*).

Like his uncle, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāfi' ibn 'Alī al-Miṣrī (649–730/1251–1330) was employed in the Mamlūk chancery in Cairo, but his career was interrupted, though not ended, when he was blinded in battle with the Mongols in Syria in 680/1281. Without attaining Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir's high rank, he did enjoy access to the sultan, sometimes as assistant to his uncle but also on his own merit. He, too, drafted documents and was privy to the inner political workings of the state. Even as a historian, however, he worked under the shadow of his illustrious relative, and his biography of Baybars, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib al-Sirriyya al-Muntaz'a min al-Sīra al-Ẓāhiriyya* (*The Excellent Secret Virtues Selected from the Life of al-Ẓāhir*), purports to be a condensation of the *Rawḍ*. Nevertheless, perhaps because it was written twenty-five years after Baybars's death, some of the errors and excesses of its model were eliminated by Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, so that the *Ḥusn* often serves a critical corrective.[27] In contrast to the reworking of the Baybars *sīra*, Shāfi' ibn 'Alī's biography of Qalāwūn, *al-Faḍl al-Ma'thūr min Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr* (*Virtue Transmitted from the Life of al-Malik al-Manṣūr*), is an original work composed partly during Qalāwūn's lifetime. It, too, however, has the character of an official biography designed to establish the sultan's legitimacy. Be that as it may, it is full of the author's personal observations of the sultan's conduct which lend an air of first-hand authenticity to the work.[28]

The third bureaucrat-biographer of Mamlūk sultans, 'Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Shaddād al-Ḥalabī (613–84/1217–85), had served in Ayyūbid chanceries in Syria before he fled from the Mongols to Cairo in 659/1261. Whether he served in any official position in the Mamlūk capital is not known, but he did enjoy the favor of sultans Baybars, Berke, and Qalāwūn.[29] Besides a topographical study of Syria and Mesopotamia, Ibn Shaddād wrote a biography of Baybars – only one volume of two has survived – probably during the reign of Berke, which, curiously, he gave the same title as that by Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir. He also followed Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir in devoting a separate section to the sultan's virtues and exploits in an attempt to glorify the Muslim monarch. But even in this section Ibn Shaddād shows his originality by providing anecdotes not to be found in the earlier work, including valuable material on the activities of Mongol and Tur-

[27] Holt, "Three Biographies," 26–27.

[28] L. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 AH/1279–1290 AD)* (Stuttgart, forthcoming), 36–37.

[29] A. Ḥuṭayṭ (ed.), *Die Geschichte des Sultans Baibars von 'Izz ad-dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Šaddād (st. 684/1285)* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 16.

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koman immigrants in the Mamlūk army and state.[30] The annalistic section of the work is distinctive for its inclusion of obituary notices for notables who died in any given year of Baybars's reign.

Higher in rank and status than the bureaucratic historians were two who belonged to the ruling political-military class: one, Abū al-Fidā', was sultan of Ḥamā in his own right; the other, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, was a high-ranking officer in the Mamlūk army. Al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad 'Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā' (672–732/1273–1331) a scion of the Ayyūbid royal family, had an illustrious career as a soldier and prince under the Mamlūks. He is even more famous as a geographer and historian. After military service in such campaigns as the Mamlūk conquest of Acre in 1291, Abū al-Fidā' enjoyed the patronage and company of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and it was this sultan who, in return for the efforts of Abū al-Fidā' to restore him to the throne in 709/1310, made him governor of Hama and subsequently sultan of that city. Thanks to his high position in Syria, his participation in military and political affairs, and his carefully cultivated friendship with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Abū al-Fidā' was in an excellent position to comment on Mamlūk affairs during his lifetime from a Syrian perspective. His history, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Ta'rīkh al-Bashar* (*Summary of the History of the Mankind*), written, perhaps, under the influence of his teacher, the Syrian historian, Ibn Wāṣil, is a universal chronicle, beginning with Adam and ending in 729/1329; it is supplemented by short obituary notices.

A contemporary of Abū al-Fidā', Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Manṣūrī al-Khiṭā'ī (d. 725/1325), served in many military campaigns as a mamlūk before al-Nāṣir Muḥammad assigned him the highest rank in the Mamlūk army – Amīr of a Hundred and Commander of a Thousand. This sultan also rewarded Baybars al-Manṣūrī with several important administrative titles, including chief of chancery and for a short time, viceroy. Given his embroilment in the volatile politics of al-Nāṣir's reign and the sultan's distrust of all his officers, it is not surprising that Baybars al-Manṣūrī fell victim to his master's paranoia and was imprisoned for five years. After his release he devoted himself to study of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, having established a Ḥanafī *madrasa* outside Cairo. He is a rare, but not unique, example of a mamlūk who combined a military career with scholarship and his career shows how effective the Mamlūk educational system must have been for exceptional students. His major historical work, *Zubdat al-Fikra fī Ta'rīkh al-Hijra* (*Choice Thoughts on Hijra History*), is a universal chronicle up to 724/1324 composed in many volumes, apparently with the help of Coptic scribes. While he is generally an authoritative and original source for the reigns of the three sultans under whom he served, beginning with Qalāwūn, recent research has shown that for that sultan and presumably for

[30] Holt, "Three Biographies," 24–25.

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earlier sultans, he often relied on Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir.[31] The annals for al-Nāṣir soon became a favorite source for other historians, both contemporary and later, because, no doubt, of the first-hand experiences the author transcribed. This section cannot be characterized as an encomium of the sultan, but neither is it critical; after all, it was obviously written when al-Nāṣir was in his prime. Later, Baybars al-Manṣūrī epitomized the Mamlūk sections of the *Zubda* in a book entitled *al-Tuḥfa al-Mulūkiyya fī al-Dawla al-Turkiyya* (*The Royal Gem for the Turkish Dynasty*). It ends with the year 711/1312. Although the *Tuḥfa* is a rhymed-prose summary of the earlier material found in the *Zubda*, the author added new data so that the two works should be used in tandem.[32] Curiously, despite the general recognition of Baybars al-Manṣūrī's central importance as a source for early Mamlūk history, only the *Tuḥfa* has so far been published.[33]

One of the most interesting historians of the Baḥrī Mamlūks, Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 736/1335), was a member of the group called *awlād al-nās*, meaning "sons of Mamlūks," who, because they were freeborn Muslims, could not, in theory and normally in practice, become Mamlūks themselves. As a result, some of them turned to belles lettres or to a branch of scholarship as a profession and thus served as a bridge between the native Arabic-speaking *'ulamā'* and the alien, Turkic-speaking Mamlūks. Those who became historians, like Ibn al-Dawādārī, tended to take a more personalized approach to historiography than either the bureaucrats or the scholars, while continuing to write within the traditional genres. Son of a Mamlūk officer of Turkish descent who held several provincial posts in both Egypt and Syria, Ibn al-Dawādārī presents himself as a frequent, if not constant, observer of his father's official activities until the latter's death in 713/1311. Accordingly, Ibn al-Dawādārī constantly cites him as an eye-witness for many of the reports in the two contemporary volumes of his nine-part universal history, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar* (*Treasure of Pearls and Trove of the Radiant*), these being the volumes devoted to Baḥrī history until the year 736/1336. Curiously, however, there is ample evidence that Ibn al-Dawādārī deliberately attributed to his father information that he copied from other historians, in an attempt, perhaps, to impart immediacy and interest to his work or maybe to increase its air of authenticity.[34] Or was he simply fond of exaggerating his own and his family's importance

[31] Northrup, *From Sultan*, 36–37.

[32] Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik an-Naṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalā'ūn* (Wiesbaden and Montreal, 1970), 4–10.

[33] With the exception of excerpts for the years 693–98/1293–98, ed. and trans. in S. Elham, *Kitbuġā und Lāġīn: Studien zur Mamluken-Geschichte nach Baibars al-Manṣūrī und an-Nuwairī* (Freiburg, 1977), 83–140, Arabic 1–30.

[34] U. Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg, 1969), 111.

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in the course of events? The possibility that he may have deliberately falsified and enhanced his own genealogy is a case in point.[35] But the distinctiveness of his history lies in what has been persuasively argued to be the efforts of Ibn al-Dawādārī and other toward "literarization" and "dehistorification" of historiography throughout the Mamlūk period.[36] To achieve the popularization of historical writing, in addition to masking the true identity of his sources Ibn al-Dawādārī adopted a number of literary devices, some of which had long been current, since, in fact, the time of the earliest biographies of the Prophet, which were heavily influenced by narrative, anecdotal, and poetic traditions of professional storytellers. Ibn al-Dawādārī, then, was reviving, or, more accurately, making greater quantitative use of anecdotes, folk romance, poetry, and *adab* in general, often couching these elements in a racy colloquial style which also served to bring history closer to the reader than the formal impersonal style adopted by most historians. Thus Ibn al-Dawādārī's chronicles exemplify the attempt to break away from a rigid historiographical framework dominated by *ḥadīth* and *ḥadīth*-trained scholars in favor of annals spiced with anecdotes and mirabilia. In the earlier volumes of the *Kanz* these are often derived from popular legends and myths current among the Turks and Mongols.[37] However, in the two Mamlūk volumes these are not so prominent, as Ibn al-Dawādārī relies more on his father's and his own experiences to enliven the narrative. Nevertheless, emphasis on the stylistic originality of Ibn al-Dawādārī should not be pushed too far, for he did choose the annalistic form as his literary vehicle; equally conventional was his use of lists of rulers and officials to introduce each year and of short obituary notices to end it. Also noteworthy is his liberal borrowing from the work of at least one Syrian-scholar historian, namely al-Jazarī; typically, he does not even mention al-Jazarī, much less acknowledge him as a source. Frequently Ibn al-Dawādārī's written sources can be identified through literary detective work, but there are long passages in the volume devoted to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad concerning events in the kingdom of the Ilkhāns that Ibn al-Dawādārī reports only on the authority of *al-nāqil* (the reporter). These reports, complete with verbatim transcripts of private conversations, are all the more intriguing since they contain information not to be found elsewhere.[38]

[35] Haarmann (ed.), *Die Chronik des Ibn ad-Dawādārī, Achter Teil, Der Bericht über die frühen Mamluken* (Freiburg, 1971), 4.

[36] Haarmann, *Quellenstudien*, 159–81; cf. idem., "Auflösung und Bewahrung der klassichen Formen arabischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Zeit der Mamluken," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 121 (1971), 46–60.

[37] See Haarmann, "Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt," *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies: Visby 13–16 August, Stockholm 17–19 August 1972* (Stockholm and Leiden, 1975), 97–107.

[38] Little, *Introduction*, 118–25.

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Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (676–759/1277–1358) cannot be positively identified either as a mamlūk or as one of the *awlād al-nās*, but he was closely associated with the latter as Muqaddam al-Ḥalqa, *viz.* commander of the non-mamlūk, freeborn corps in which the sons of mamlūks formed a special unit during much of the Baḥrī period. In any event he served in many campaigns waged far away from Egypt, in Syria against the Mongols, for example, and in Yemen, and in Little Armenia. As a result he became acquainted with many prominent Mamlūk officers of high rank and quoted them freely as his sources, both for military engagements and for affairs of state. Al-Yūsufī also had friends in the Mamlūk bureaucracy, including a wazīr, two keepers of the privy purse, and a court physician among many others. These again al-Yūsufī quotes as eyewitnesses of public and private events. In this respect, of course, he had much in common with Ibn al-Dawādārī along with their lack of a traditional scholarly education. In fact, al-Yūsufī occasionally laments his lack of training and proficiency in Arabic grammar and literature, while at the same time acknowledging that his poems were admired and that his prose was adequate for purposes of official correspondence.[39] Be that as it may, his history is written in a highly colloquial style characteristic of Middle Arabic, that is, in classical Arabic influenced by local dialects. His only known work, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (*A Spectator's Stroll through the Life of al-Malik al-Nāṣir*), in about a dozen volumes, has survived only in a fragment covering the years 733–38/1332–38, but long passages for other years have been transcribed or recast by contemporary and later historians, most notably al-Shujā'ī and al-'Aynī.[40] Enough of his original text is retrievable from such sources to establish the *Nuzha* as the fullest, best documented contemporary source for the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. In spite of the title's focus on al-Nāṣir, it is known that the book began with the reign of Qalāwūn and ended with the year 755/1354, thirteen years after the sultan's death. Like Ibn al-Dawādārī's volume on the *sīra* (life, biography) of al-Nāṣir (*al-Durr al-Fākhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (*The Splendid Pearl of the Life of al-Malik al-Nāṣir*), the *Nuzha* is organized as an annalistic chronicle; but there is a major difference between the two works. Whereas Ibn al-Dawādārī pays only perfunctory attention to obituary notices, al-Yūsufī appends to each year detailed, often lengthy, biographies of notables, be they mamlūks, bureaucrats, scholars, or literati. Indeed, al-Yūsufī's keen interest in people is evident on every page as he describes their looks and analyzes their personalities, often from his personal knowledge of them but sometimes from gossip. He does not hesitate to

[39] Little, "The Recovery of a Lost Source for Baḥrī Mamlūk History: Al-Yūsufī's *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*," *JAOS*, 94 (1974), 48.

[40] Little, "An Analysis of the Relationship between Four Mamlūk Chronicles for 737–45," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 19 (1974), 252–68.

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create private conversations which he could not possibly have heard and to produce melodramatic scenarios marked by an obvious conviction that conspiracy and intrigue lay behind the lives and deaths of al-Nāṣir's retainers and officials. The *Nuzha*, then, is a distinctly personalized version of history; it reads like fiction and is even more "literarized" than Ibn al-Dawādārī's *Kanz al-Durar*. Nevertheless, the *Nuzha* is extremely valuable as the only history of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign that openly criticizes the sultan. Moreover, because it was used so copiously by other historians, it was extremely influential in creating the historical image of al-Nāṣir as an unprincipled megalomaniac that prevails today, despite the encomia of Ibn al-Dawādārī and others.

Among al-Yūsufī's contemporaries, Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Shujā'ī (d. after 756/1355–56) made the fullest use of *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir* in his work *Ta'rīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa-Awlādihi* (*History of al-Malik al-Nāṣir* [...] *and his Progeny*). Although this work survives only in a fragment for the years 737–745/1337–1345, collation with al-Yūsufī's extant annals for 738 and with passages for later years found in other sources indicate that al-Shujā'ī based his work almost entirely on al-Yūsufī's, without mentioning his name.[41] But the *Ta'rīkh* is extremely important for 741 and following years for preserving data from al-Yūsufī' which is absent from other extant sources.

Another Egyptian historian who lived during the Baḥrī period who should be mentioned is Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il if only because he was a Copt. Unfortunately, nothing else is known about his life except that he finished his work, *al-Nahj al-Sadīd wa-al-Durr al-Farīd fimā ba'd Ta'rīkh Ibn al-'Amīd* (*The Right Path and Unique Pearl as Sequel to the History of Ibn al-'Amīd*) in 759/1358, Contrary to expectations, this work, a history of the Baḥrī dynasty covering the years 658–741/1259–1341, shows little originality beyond a few short references to Coptic patriarchs. Otherwise, it is a typical Mamlūk chronicle and is based almost entirely on Muslim sources, including Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Nuwayrī, and al-Yūsufī. Even though at times Mufaḍḍal omitted details from his sources that might have reflected badly on Copts, he occasionally copied Muslim religious formulae into his work![42]

Besides Abu al-Fidā' there are several contemporary Syrian historians who, collectively, are of capital importance for Baḥrī Mamlūk historiography. Despite the fact that two of these – Ibn Kathīr (c. 700–774/1300–73) and al-Dhahabī (673–748/1274–1348) – are more famous than their peers, their works, as far as Mamlūk history is concerned, are largely derivative from three of them: al-Birzālī, al-Yūnīnī, and al-Jazarī. All

[41] Ibid. [42] Little, *Introduction*, 37.

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five were *ḥadīth* scholars trained primarily in Syria; most are known to have studied also in Cairo, where they could become acquainted with Egyptian affairs at first hand. Al-Birzālī, al-Yūnīnī, and al-Jazarī were closely associated as teachers, students, and friends. This association was so close and harmonious, in fact, that they lent one another their historical works in draft and felt free to borrow freely from them, sometimes with, sometimes without, acknowledgment. They also served as oral sources to one another, especially al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī. Such close collaboration among scholars has few, if any, parallels in Arabic historiography.

Of the three, the most important in terms of his influence on other historians was Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Jazarī (658–739/1260–1338). His principal work, *Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā'uhu wa-Wafāyāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā'ihi* (*Events and News of the Time with Obituaries of Worthies and Notables*), has survived only in fragments, few of which have been published so far. As the title indicates, the work gives equal emphasis to annals and obituaries and is valuable for the attention given to the lives and careers of Syrian scholars. Apparently conceived as a continuation of a twelfth-century Syrian chronicle, the *Ḥawādith* begins with the year 593/1196 and continues until the year of al-Jazarī's death. While the early sections are derived from written sources, most notably al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl*, beginning with the year 678/1279–80 al-Jazarī writes from his own experience and that of his oral informants, including al-Birzālī, whose written work he probably used also.[43] Thanks to a wide network of informants, al-Jazarī was able to provide reports on events in such remote places as Yemen and the Ilkhānid court in Iran as well as the Mamlūk capital in Cairo. Al-Jazarī's training as a *ḥadīth* expert may well have induced him to identify these informants, sometimes in the form of a chain of authorities (*isnād*) when he received a report at second- or third-hand. His professional interest is also apparent in the attention given to religious affairs. The space devoted to biographies of religious figures has already been mentioned, and he is one of the main sources for our knowledge of the trials of the celebrated Ḥanbalī jurist, Ibn Taymiyya, conducted in Cairo in 705/1305 by the Mamlūk authorities. Al-Jazarī did not witness the trials himself and had to rely on an Egyptian informant. Oddly enough, this did not prevent Ibn al-Dawādārī and al-Nuwayrī, both of whom were present in Cairo at the time, from dipping into al-Jazarī's second-hand account.[44] But al-Jazarī's interest certainly went beyond religious affairs. By dint of his friendship with mamlūk officers, he was well informed about military campaigns in Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. In addition to reports on political, military and religious affairs, his annals are peppered with digres-

[43] Ibid., 53–57, 60–61. [44] Ibid., 61.

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sions and anecdotes about strange and curious events both at home and abroad: for example, a long narration of his visit to the pyramids in Giza. In this respect al-Jazarī serves as Syrian counterpart to Ibn al-Dawādārī for his deliberate introduction of entertaining material expressed, moreover, in a light literary style influenced by Damascus Arabic, all designed to loosen and popularize traditional Arabic historiography while at the same time retaining the traditional chronicle-obituary format.

Like al-Jazarī's, little of the work of 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim al-Birzālī (665–739/1267–1339) is available. *Al-Muqtafā li-Ta'rīkh al-Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Abī Shāma* (*Continuation of the History of* [...] *Abū Shāma*) exists only in a manuscript fragment in such poor condition that it can no longer be handled by scholars. As a continuation of *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, it begins with the year of Abū Shāma's death in 665/1267 – also the year of al-Birzālī's birth – and ends with 738/1338. This particular manuscript, located in Istanbul, contains only a rough draft in the form of a diary in which al-Birzālī mixed his notes on daily events with necrologies. In its present state the main value of the *Muqtafā* is the opportunity it affords for comparison with the texts of al-Jazarī and other historians. Collation suggests the interdependence of al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī, but the fragile, fragmentary state of *al-Muqtafā* makes definitive conclusions difficult. Suffice it to say that al-Birzālī's conception and presentation of history had much in common with al-Jazarī's and that both combined a provincial scholarly approach with a lively curiosity in events beyond Damascus.[45]

Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā al-Yūnīnī (640–726/1242–1326) also wrote a sequel to an Ayyubid work: *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* (*Sequel to the Mirror of the Time*), which begins with the year of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's death in 654/1256 and ends with 711/1312. Detailed textual study by several scholars has demonstrated that much, if not most, of the *Dhayl* is a close copy or edition of al-Jazarī's *Ḥawādith*. In fact, the correspondence between the two texts is so close that the most recent scholar to study these authors concludes that a later editor wrongly attributed a section of al-Jazarī's work to al-Yūnīnī![46] Furthermore, he suggests that al-Birzālī, who was a student of al-Yūnīnī's borrowed material from al-Yūnīnī and passed it on to al-Jazarī. Al-Jazarī included it in *Ḥawādith*, and al-Yūnīnī, in turn, used it, twice removed, in his *Dhayl*.[47] Whether or not this particular conclusion can be substantiated is not so important as the incontestable fact that complex mutual borrowing did take place among this small group of Syrian historians. Extensive,

[45] Ibid., 56–57.

[46] Li Guo, "The Middle Bahrī Mamlūks in Medieval Syrian Historiography: The Years 1297–1302 in the *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* Attributed to Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā al-Yūnīnī: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Annotated Translation, and Source Criticism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1994), I, 105–13.

[47] Ibid., 110.

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unacknowledged borrowing, as we have seen, is characteristic of Ayyūbid and Mamlūk historiography in general. To label such in practice as plagiarism is sometimes tempting but does not solve the problem faced by modern scholars in trying to trace the original source and to assess its reliability.

Oddly enough, an important chronicle for the Baḥrī period is embedded in an encyclopedia designed for the use of chancery employees: al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (*All That Can be Desired in the Scribal Arts*). Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī (677–733/1279–1333) was himself a clerk and worked both in Syria and Egypt in the *Dīwān al-Khāṣṣ* (Bureau of the Privy Purse) and, later, the *Dīwān al-Inshā'* (Bureau of Chancery) among other offices. In the former his supervision of some of the royal properties and endowments gave him access to Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, though he fell for a while into his master's disfavor. His multi-volume encyclopedia is divided into four parts; the first three cover cosmography and natural history, man, and flora and fauna. The last part, comprising two-thirds of the work, is devoted to history, beginning with the Creation and ending in 731/1332. It is arranged chronologically within designated regions and dynasties, including, of course, the Baḥrī Mamlūks of Egypt and Syria. But al-Nuwayrī is noteworthy among his Egyptian contemporaries for his willingness to break the annalistic format whenever he thought an event could not be recounted effectively within a single year: the trials of Ibn Taymiyya, for example.[48] As innocuous as this practice may seem, it is one of the few instances in Baḥrī historiography of innovative experimentation with the rigid annalistic format.[49] Much of the section devoted to the Mamlūks is derivative, of course, from other historians, sometimes identified, sometimes not, but including Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, and al-Jazarī as well as the standard late Ayyūbid historians. Nevertheless, thanks to the access his position gave him to other administrators and military officers, al-Nuwayrī was able to add material from his own, or his informants' experience, so that his chronicle contains a great deal of original information. Moreover, there is evidence that he did not hesitate to reorganize and reinterpret the material he borrowed when he saw fit.[50] Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī (700–749/1301–1349), Syrian by birth, was another chancery official in Cairo and Damascus who compiled reference works for scribes that contain material of interest to historians. His *al-Ta'rīf bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf* (*Instruction on the Noble Technique*) is a short manual for chancery clerks on drafting decrees and official correspondence. It also contains information on the organization and administration of the Mamlūk state. Though brief, it was a major source for the later encyclopedia

[48] Little, *Introduction*, 29. [49] Ibid., 86. [50] Ibid., 32.

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compiled by al-Qalqashandī.[51] But al-'Umarī's magnum opus was his vast encyclopedia, similar to al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab* in scope and design, entitled *Masālik al-Abṣār fi Mamālik al-Amṣar* (*Paths of Discernment into the Kingdoms of the Lands*). It, too, contains a historical section of annals, dating from the hijra until 743/1343, but it is disappointing even for the period during which the author lived, being a copy of al-Dhahabī's *Duwal al-Islām* (*Dynasties of Islam*).[52] However, other sections, in particular those devoted to specific regions contiguous to the Mamlūk Empire are of considerable interest, and several of these have been published: for example, those on India, the Mongol empires, Syria, and the Arabian peninsula.

Although Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (696–764/1297–1363) was not the only author of biographical dictionaries who flourished during the Baḥrī period, he was certainly the most prolific. Like Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Ṣafadī was the son of a Mamlūk amīr, with an entrée into the elite society of the Mamlūks and its satellites in government, education, and the arts. Al-Ṣafadī's privileged status as a member of *awlād al-nās* was enhanced by his education in Syria, presumably in Safad, where he was born and eventually worked, but also in Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo, as a student of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and literature with some of the most prominent scholars of the age, including, apparently, Ibn Taymiyya and al-Dhahabī.[53] As early as 723/1323 he found employment in Safad as a clerk in the chancery. From this post he was promoted to the Damascus chancery, and in this capacity he became a member of the entourage of the famous viceroy Tankiz, whom he frequently accompanied on official visits to Cairo and elsewhere. Inevitably, Tankiz incurred al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's disfavor and was executed; al-Ṣafadī survived and in 745/1345 was appointed to Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl's chancery in Cairo. Later he returned to Syria, again as a chancery official, in Aleppo and elsewhere, and died in Damascus. Despite an obviously full professional career and extensive travel, al-Ṣafadī found time to write numerous books on various literary and linguistic subjects as well as a substantial body of poetry. His two massive works, still of major importance as historical sources, are both biographical dictionaries. Ironically, the less original of the two, *al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafāyāt* (*Sufficiency of Obituaries*), has received the major attention of scholars, presumably because of its comprehensiveness as a collection of thousands of biographies (more than 5,500 for the Muḥammads!) of prominent Muslims from the time of the Prophet to the author's contemporaries. Publication of this immense work began in 1931 and

[51] R. Veselý, "Zu den Quellen al-Qalqašandī's *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*," *Acta Universitatis Carolinae–Philologica*, 2 (1969), 13–14.

[52] Little, *Introduction*, 40.

[53] Little, "Al-Ṣafadī as Biographer of His Contemporaries," in D. Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization Presented to Niyazi Berkes* (Leiden, 1976), 206–07.

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continues today. Al-Ṣafadī's relish for biography was not satisfied by this enormous work, so he devoted a separate dictionary to the lives of his contemporaries, entitled *A'yān al-'Aṣr wa-A'wān al-Naṣr* (*Notables of the Age and Supporters of Triumph*), comprising almost 1,900 biographies. some of these were extracted from and embellished with rhymed prose and additional data from *al-Wāfī*, but half or more are completely independent of that work. Notwithstanding its great value as a contemporary source, *A'yān* has been published only in facsimile, without critical apparatus. Be that as it may, it is a tour de force almost unparalleled in Arabic historiography for its exploitation of literary sources and the author's vast network of eyewitness informants. Among the former are al-Birzālī's lost dictionary of 3,000 of his teachers, al-Udfuwī's biographical dictionary of notables from Upper Egypt, and a lost history of Egypt by Quṭb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Karīm.[54] In number and status his oral informants are as impressive as al-Yūsufī's and include colleagues in the bureaucracy (including al-'Umarī and Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Thanā', who headed the Damascus chancery), the grammarian Abū Ḥayyān, the *ḥadīth* expert Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, and the chief Shāfi'ī qāḍī, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī.[55] These are only some of the most eminent of the dozens of informants he cites for first-hand information and anecdotes about his biographees. Unfortunately, only a few women rated his notice, and these are either wives of high-ranking Mamlūks or students of *ḥadīth*. Almost all of the biographies follow a standard, more or less chronological, format and differ from those of *al-Wāfī* only by rhymed-prose introductions in the former, summing up al-Ṣafadī's estimate of the person's character and accomplishments. From a structural point of view the long biography of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad is noteworthy in both dictionaries inasmuch as it is organized as annals, following which al-Ṣafadī appends lists of that sultan's chief officers of state and contemporary rulers.[56] But the influence of chronicles and biographies was clearly reciprocal, for Ibn al-Dawādārī's chronicle-biography of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign has the same format as al-Ṣafadī's shorter version.

Burjī historians

Among many anomalies in the editing, translation, analysis, and publication of Mamlūk histories as conducted by both eastern and western scholars is their uncritical concentration on some historians of the Circassian period at the expense of others, whether Baḥrī or Burjī, irrespective, at times, of the historical value of their works. Thus the chronicles of al-Maqrīzī for the

[54] Ibid., 200–02. [55] Ibid., 202–06. [56] Little, *Introduction*, 100–01.

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Baḥrī period were edited and partially translated long before those of his contemporary al-ʿAynī began to be published, despite the fact that the latter are far superior to the former as a source for the period in most respects. Although Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima* (*Prolegomena*) has long been recognized as the acme of Muslim historiography, Ibn Khaldūn's uniqueness as a theorist has served to diminish the attention given to his chronicles. The works of Ibn Taghrī Birdī, like those of al-Maqrīzī, were edited, published, and translated before they were subjected to critical scrutiny. In fact, critical analysis of the originality, sources, and possible interdependence of these and other Burjī historians has not yet approached the level of scholarship on the Baḥrī historians. Many of the observations made here, then, should be regarded as tentative, pending further research and publication.

A case in point is the Egyptian scholar, Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Furāt (735–807/1334–1405), who after being educated in *ḥadīth*, secured positions as a notary. Otherwise, little is known about him, and his universal history, *Taʾrīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk* (*History of Dynasties and Kings*), has survived only in fragments, a few of which have been published. Of these fragments the Ayyūbid section is described as important because Ibn al-Furāt made extensive use of the lost history by the Aleppan Shīʿī historian, Ibn Abī Ṭayyiʾ (as did Abū Shāma).[57] The sections on the Baḥrī sultans have been shown to be largely derivative from al-Nuwayrī with additions from al-Jazarī.[58] So far only a single volume has been published for the years of Ibn al-Furāt's own lifetime; arranged as a diary, it covers the period 789–797/1387–1395. Short reports of events are followed by numerous obituary notices. Since Ibn al-Furāt was not in the habit of identifying his sources for this period, it will be impossible to determine his originality for contemporary events until such time as comparison with other sources has been undertaken.

The conventional history of Ibn al-Furāt and other Mamlūk historians does nothing to anticipate the contribution of Ibn Khaldūn. Apparently unappreciated for his genius during his lifetime and for centuries thereafter, he was finally discovered by the Ottoman historian Naʿīma in the eighteenth century and was subsequently recognized and acclaimed in the west as a major figure in the development of the philosophy of history and sociology.

Nor does Ibn Khaldūn's life as set forth in his autobiography account for the originality of his thought. A good case could be made for characterizing him as a careerist because of the multiplicity of his appointments and dismissals at courts stretching from Spain to Cairo; nevertheless, he obviously found time and energy to function as a prolific historian. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn (732–808/1332–1406) was born in

[57] *EI*2, III, 769. [58] Little, *Introduction*, 73–74.

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Tunis and studied there with eminent scholars the subjects of the traditional Islamic curriculum; he was deeply influenced by philosophy and theology. When he was seventeen his parents died of plague and he emigrated to Fez. During twenty-three years' residence in the Maghrib he continued his studies and held various positions, including Secretary of the Chancery at the court of the Marinid sultan Abū 'Inān Fāris. He also served time in prison for his alleged involvement in an attempted palace coup. Politics led him to move to Granada in 760/1359, where under the patronage of the famous wazīr and poet Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Ibn Khaldūn was well received at the Nasrid court and served as envoy to the Christians of Seville. After seven years he returned to the Maghrib. There he combined study with political office and intrigue; the latter induced him to return to Spain for a while and back to the Maghrib once more. During a four-year period of seclusion (776–80/1375–79), he worked on the *Muqaddima*. Then he returned to his birthplace as a scholar and teacher. In Tunis he prepared the first edition of his universal history, *Kitāb al-'Ibar wa-al-Mubtada' wa-al-Khabar* (*Book of Examples and Register of Subjects and Predicates*), a copy of which he presented to the Hafsid sultan. But Ibn Khaldūn apparently enjoyed no peace of mind in Tunis, so in 784/1382 he left, with the sultan's permission, ostensibly to perform the pilgrimage. He landed in Cairo, where he found employment both as a professor of jurisprudence and, in 786/1384, as chief Mālikī *qāḍī* under Sultan Barqūq. From the latter office he was presumably dismissed out of professional envy, later reinstated, again dismissed, until he had served in this capacity six times.[59] But he did manage to retain several important teaching positions and even served as head of a royal Ṣūfī monastery. Perhaps his most illustrious public service under the Mamlūks was as an envoy to Timūr-Lenk, whom he met on several occasions during the siege of Damascus in 1400.

Obviously Ibn Khaldūn's wide experience as a scholar and public servant under many masters should have been beneficial to a history oriented toward *siyāsa* (politics) and the conduct of public affairs, and his cyclical view of the rise and fall of dynasties that originated with nomads imbued with religious fervor, flourished as conquerors, and declined once they had become sedentarized and corrupted by effete urban life, was grounded in Ibn Khaldūn's knowledge of the role of both Arab and Bedouin tribesmen in Maghribi history. Nevertheless, there is little in his biography to explain satisfactorily his unique conceptualization of the nature and function of history within the Islamic arts, sciences, and crafts, though scores of scholars have certainly tried to do so. The relationship of the *Muqaddima* to the *'Ibar*, or, more precisely, the alleged failure of the latter to meet the standards of the former, is but one of many issues raised by Ibn Khaldūn's

[59] *EI2*, III, 827–28.

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work. Since this is a subject of great complexity, it must suffice to point out that two of the most recent students of this question have taken a revisionist stance and argued that the great historian has been misunderstood:

> Because most modern scholarship has taken relatively little interest in the *History*, tending in fact to dismiss it as an incongruous appendage to the *Muqaddima* or as no better or even worse than many typical histories of that age, it serves our interest well here to show ... that Ibn Khaldūn's history was a rigorous and precisely constructed account, arranged by states, of world history as it needs to be understood and rewritten when the principles of the *Muqaddima* are kept in view.[60]

It should also be noted that the *'Ibar* is recognized as being one of the most important single sources on the history of the Maghrib under Muslim rule. Be that as it may, there are long stretches in the *'Ibar* derived totally from earlier sources. For the early reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, for example, Ibn Khaldūn was content to summarize al-Nuwayrī and supplement him briefly with material from the standard Syrian sources, al-Jazarī and al-Yūnīnī.[61] Nevertheless, even the standard account of Baḥrī history is dramatically punctuated by Ibn Khaldūn's eloquent passage on the impact of slave soldiers on Islamic history through their defeat of the pagan Mongols.[62] As a historian of his contemporaries, Ibn Khaldūn's history of Sultan Barqūq is particularly valuable from the perspective of an insider under this sultan's patronage. As might be expected, the author is not critical of his patron, and his chronicle of the years of Barqūq's reign (784–801/1382–99) is typical of the court histories of the Mamlūk period.

Ibn Khaldūn's autobiography should also be mentioned as a noteworthy historical source if only because of the rarity of this genre in Muslim literature. *Al-Ta'rīf bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa-Riḥlatuha Gharban was Sharqan* (*Introducing Ibn Khaldūn and His Travel East and West*) was originally intended as an appendix to the *'Ibar*, but at some point the author decided to publish the work separately as reflections on his life and times until a few months before his death.[63] While the *Ta'rīf* focuses on the major events of Ibn Khaldūn's life, these led him to digressions on the places and people with whom he was involved, often summarizing fuller discussions in the *'Ibar*. Moreover, the work is enlivened with quotations from poetry and samples of his correspondence composed in rhymed prose. Unfortunately, however,

[60] Tarif Khalidi, *Historical Thought*, 223; cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism* (London, 1981), 201–20.

[61] Little, *Introduction*, 75–76.

[62] D. Ayalon, "Mamlūkiyyāt: (B) Ibn Khaldūn's View of the Mamlūk Phenomenon," *JSAI*, 2 (1980), 340–49.

[63] W. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt: His Public Functions and His Historical Research* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), 160–66.

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the *Ta'rīf* contains little information about the central issue of the process by which his major work was inspired and composed.

Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442) is probably the best-known historian of the Mamlūk period with the obvious exception of Ibn Khaldūn, who may have been one of his 600 teachers. Western scholars have been profuse in their praise of al-Maqrīzī, acclaiming him as "beyond doubt the most eminent of the Mamlūk historians," or judging him to be "the best of the Muslim historians of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries," and "the *Sulūk* to be the leading production of the period."[64] It was claimed that this rank could be justified by the fact that "the leading historians of that generation in Egypt were al-Maqrīzī's students," such as Ibn Taghrī Birdī and al-Sakhāwī, and that other contemporaries, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī and al-'Aynī, "were *ḥadīth* scholars more than historians, since they did not devote their full attention to history as did al-Maqrīzī."[65] Another reason for al-Maqrīzī's fame is undoubtedly the sheer bulk of his historical works; in addition to the several books devoted to the history of Egypt he was author of monographs on such ancillary subjects as famine, tribes, coins, measures, etc. Still another reason for his popularity may well be the accident that his works have been published and widely distributed before those of his unheralded contemporary, al-'Aynī.

Before he became a professional historian al-Maqrīzī had a varied, if lackluster, career as a teacher and public official. Mainly in Cairo, his birthplace, but also for ten years in Damascus, he served in various capacities such as chancery clerk, judge, prayer leader, *muḥtasib*, financial officer, and professor of *ḥadīth*. Trained in the Islamic curriculum, al-Maqrīzī studied Ḥanafī jurisprudence with his grandfather, but after the latter's death renounced and even attacked it in favor of Shāfi'ism. Around 821/1418, when al-Maqrīzī returned to Cairo from Damascus, he seems to have retired from teaching and public service in order to devote himself to his interest in Egyptian history. Nevertheless, in 833–39/1430–35 he is known to have sojourned in Mecca with his family. There he again taught *ḥadīth* while writing history.[66]

Perhaps, it has been suggested, al-Maqrīzī's several separate historical works should be considered as parts of a comprehensive history of Egypt.[67] The first of these parts, written between 820 and 840/1417 and 1436, is the great *al-Mawā'iẓ wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār fī Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira* (*Admonitions and Reflections on the Quarters and Monuments in*

[64] Philip Hitti and M. M. Ziyāda are both cited by R. Broadhurst (trans.), *A History of the Ayyubid Sultans of Egypt* (Boston, 1980), xvi–xvii.

[65] M. Ziyāda (ed.), *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifa Duwal al-Mulūk* (Cairo, 1934), I, p. *waw*.

[66] Ziyāda, *Al-Mu'arrikhūn fī Miṣr fī al-Qarn al-Khāmis 'Ashar al-Mīlādī, al-Qarn al-Tāsi' al-Hijrī* (Cairo, 1954), 9.

[67] H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1963), 146.

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Fusṭāṭ and Cairo), commonly known as *al-Khiṭaṭ*, a topographical study focusing on Cairo but encompassing Egypt in general. Whether it was plagiarized, as sometimes charged, from an earlier work is not important, since the alleged source is lost and is preserved only in *al-Khiṭaṭ*. It should be noted, moreover, that there were other precedents for Mamlūk topographical history. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir, for example, was the author of a lost book on the topography of Cairo, frequently cited by al-Maqrīzī, especially for the Fāṭimid city,[68] and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī included many descriptions of monuments in his encyclopedia, *Masālik al-Abṣār*. In any case, the *Khiṭaṭ* has served as a prime source for many aspects of Egyptian history, primarily, it is true, for the architectural history of Islamic edifices but also for the organization and conduct of urban life in Cairo. Building on this core, al-Maqrīzī proceeded to write a series of chronicles and biographies covering the history of Egypt from the Muslim conquest up until his own day. These works include histories of Fusṭāṭ as a province of the caliphate, Cairo under the Fāṭimids, and, finally, Egypt under the Ayyubids and Mamlūks, *al-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk* (*The Path to Knowledge of Dynasties and Kings*). Curiously, although parts of this latter book were published and translated at a relatively early date on the strength of scholarly admiration for *al-Khiṭaṭ*, the later, contemporary, sections of *al-Sulūk* were not published until much later. As far as Baḥrī Mamlūk history is concerned, al-Maqrīzī had to rely completely, of course, on earlier sources, and these he adapted freely and sometimes indiscriminately without identifying them. Perhaps the most egregious example of his abuse of sources is found in his distortion of al-ʿUmarī's remarks on the Mongols, whereby al-Maqrīzī inflated and distorted the influence of Mongol law on Mamlūk administrative justice.[69] Unfortunately, until such time as the contemporary annals of *al-Sulūk* have been compared with those of other historians, especially those of al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī's significance as a historian will remain as a compiler and preserver of the work of others.

Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (762–855/1361–1451) also combined a career as public teacher and *fiqh* scholar with a professional interest in history. After a conventional education in Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and related disciplines in northern Syria, where he learned Turkish as well as Arabic, al-ʿAynī moved to Cairo in 801/1399. There he was appointed *muḥtasib* to replace al-Maqrīzī. In and out of this office several times he served in other capacities as well, including professor, Supervisor of Pious Endowments, and Chief Ḥanafī Judge.[70] In these high positions al-ʿAynī had access to several sultans and, in fact, composed eulogistic biographies of three of them: al-Muʿayyad Shaykh, al-

[68] *EI2*, III, 679; VI, 194.

[69] Ayalon, "The Great *Yāsa* of Chingiz Khān: A Re-examination. (C-2) Al-Maqrīzī's Passage on the *Yāsa* under the Mamlūks," *Studia Islamica*, 38 (1973), 121–23.

[70] Ziyāda, *Al-Muʾarrikhūn*, 20.

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Ẓāhir Ṭaṭar, and al-Ashraf Barsbay.[71] Indeed, al-'Ayni used to meet regularly with Barsbay to explain to him the intricacies of *fiqh* and to translate his history extemporaneously into Turkish, since Barsbay could not read Arabic. His multi-volume work, *'Iqd al-Jumān fī Ta'rīkh Ahl al-Zamān* (*A Pearl Necklace of the History of the People of the Time*), is a universal history, beginning with the Creation and proceeding through eight and a half centuries of Muslim dynasties. Inexplicably, the parts concerning the Mamlūks began to be published only in 1987. Inexplicably, because as already stated, *'Iqd al-Jumān* is superior to al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk*; this is true in terms both of systematic organization and identification and citation of sources. Moreover, it can be demonstrated in many cases that when al-'Aynī and al-Maqrīzī used the same source, particularly al-Yūsufī, al-'Aynī almost invariably gave a fuller, more detailed adaptation of the original than did al-Maqrīzī.[72] In fact, one of the chief merits of *'Iqd al-Jumān* for the Baḥrī period is his preservation and identification of so much of al-Yūsufī's work. As far as organization and presentation are concerned, al-Maqrīzī follows strict chronological order in his annals, month by month and even day by day when possible. Al-'Aynī, on the other hand, routinely follows a topical order, starting each annal with a list of rulers and officials, followed by discussion of the most prominent events of the year, and ending with reports of "remaining" events. Both historians append obituary notices to each annal; these are divided roughly into *'ulamā'* and secular personages, with the former normally taking priority unless a ruler such as a sultan happened to die in a given year.

So far only a brief selection of al-'Aynī's annals for the Burjī period has been published. These cover a period of twenty-six years, 825–50/1421–47, in which the author lived. As preserved, these annals are similar in general to al-Maqrīzī's chronological format, though al-'Aynī usually prefaces each annal with a lengthy list of rulers and functionaries. Curiously, few topics are developed in the same detail they received in the earlier sections, in which al-'Aynī had to rely exclusively on written sources; in fact, this contemporary section of the work reads almost like a day book which may have been intended as a first draft of a later work, planned but not completed. Infrequently al-'Aynī mentions his own observation of events, but for the most part he cites no sources. Again, however, judgment of his significance as a historian, like al-Maqrīzī's, should be suspended until systematic comparison of their works has been undertaken.

Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf ibn Taghrī Birdī (812–74/1409–70) has been praised as a historian for his intimate familiarity "with Mamlūk military society and with the Mamlūk army. His knowledge of these institutions was

[71] 'A. al-Qarmūṭ (ed.), *'Iqd al-Juman fi Ta'rikh Ahl al-Zamān* (Cairo, 1989), 39.
[72] Little, "Analysis," 259–61.

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far superior to that of any other Mamlūk historian. But for his writings no detailed and reliable reconstruction of Mamlūk society would be possible".[73]

Son of the highest-ranking Mamlūk officers under sultans Barqūq and Faraj, Ibn Taghrī Birdī was reared after his father died by two of his in-laws, a Ḥanafī judge and a Shāfi'ī judge. They saw to it that Ibn Taghrī Birdī was educated in the Islamic sciences, including the study of history under al-Maqrīzī and al-'Aynī, before he was taken under the patronage of a group of his father's mamlūks, who apparently undertook to train him in the arts of war.[74] Thus he was one of the privileged few historians whose milieu embraced the military and scholarly worlds. Furthermore, thanks to his status as a member of the elite *awlād al-nās* and his acquaintance with several sultans, including al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, Barsbay, Jaqmaq, and Khushqadam, he naturally had access to the Mamlūk court. But Ibn Taghrī Birdī was a historian by profession, conscious of inheriting al-Maqrīzī's and al-'Aynī's prestige as premier court historian of his time.[75] He was author of a biographical dictionary (to be discussed later) and two major chronicles. *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira* (*Resplendant Stars among the Kings of Miṣr and Cairo*) is a history of Islamic Egypt, beginning with its conquest and ending with 872/1468. It is a work by a courtier for courtiers, or, more specifically, for Sultan Jaqmaq's son, who died before he could succeed his father on the throne. In format the *Nujūm* differs markedly from Ayyūbid and other Mamlūk histories in that it is arranged by reigns of individual rulers rather than strict annalistic chronology. Nevertheless, within each reign chronological order is followed, though there is no formal division of events by years. In keeping with this arrangement, Ibn Taghrī Birdī withheld the obituaries until the end of each sultan's reign, at which point he grouped them by each year. Whatever his purpose may have been, these structural innovations reinforce the biographical emphasis of this work. In contrast, Ibn Taghrī Birdī's second chronicle reverts to the traditional format, perhaps because it was intended as a continuation of al-Maqrīzī's *al-Sulūk*. The title, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr fī Maḍā al-Ayyām wa-al-Shuhūr* (*Events of the Times within the Passage of Days and Months*), clearly reflects the annalistic structure; the biographies, noticeably longer than those in *al-Sulūk*, are placed conventionally after each annal. This work begins where *al-Sulūk* ends, with 845/1441, and ends with 874/1469, covering the reigns of seven sultans, plus the early years of Qāytbāy. Although there is some overlap between the *Nujūm* and *Ḥawādith*, the former is not as detailed or as comprehensive as the latter. Obviously, given

[73] Ayalon, "Notes on the *Furūsiyya* Exercises and Games in the Mamlūk Sultanate," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 9 (1961), 32.
[74] Ziyāda, *Al-Mu'arrikhūn*, 28.
[75] *Ibid.*, 30.

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Ibn Taghrī Birdī's access to court circles and his familiarity with the Mamlūk system, the *Ḥawādith* and the contemporary section of the *Nujūm* constitute an invaluable personal commentary on persons, institutions, and events. Just as obviously, Ibn Taghrī Birdī had to rely on earlier written sources for the bulk of *al-Nujūm*, many of which he cited by name. Curiously, al-Maqrīzī is seldom mentioned. But his dependence on earlier sources did not deter Ibn Taghrī Birdī from placing his own interpretations on events, and these are often difficult if not impossible to disentangle from the originals. Despite the fact that even some of his contemporaries, most notably al-Sakhāwī, excoriated him for his failings as a historian and an Arabist, many of his errors have received wide currency until the present day. Recently, however, careful analysis of his texts and collation with other sources have resulted in considerable skepticism toward his version of some events and a recognition of his tendency to idealize the reigns of the Baḥrī sultans, a tendency he shared with al-Maqrīzī.[76] Be that as it may, as a historian of his own generation, specifically of the early reign of Qāytbāy, Ibn Taghrī Birdī's writings have been characterized as expressing "sober judgments of crises and shrewd assessments of character" as well as "musings of a mature thinker whose opinions were tinged with the cynicism of old age."[77]

Although there are several other chroniclers of the Circassian period whose works should not be neglected by present-day students, this survey ends with Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī (852–930/1448–1524), since both his career and his oeuvre epitomize several salient aspects of Mamlūk historiography. In his life and work Ibn Iyās is reminiscent of Ibn al-Dawādārī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī, in that all three belonged to Mamlūk families and based their histories of contemporaneous events on eyewitness experience – their own and others'. All three, moreover, wrote popularized histories in a conventional format but in a style influenced by the Egyptian vernacular and various literary devices.

> Indeed, the *Badā'iʿ az-zuhūr* of Ibn Iyās can be characterized as history in only a very limited way: in its popular thematics and its fabulist embellishments, alien to historical factuality, this last great medieval Arabic chronicle was linked to the historicized folk romance, hence to the light prose that was extremely popular at the time but was not recognized as literature. [This type of prose] had developed as a substratum from the days of earliest Islam until Mamlūk times, next to, or, more accurately, beneath, scholarly historiography, but was now reintegrated with it for the first time since the tenth century.[78]

Whatever Ibn Iyās's shortcomings as a historian may be, his work is of

[76] See Little, *Introduction*, 90–92; Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamluk Kingdom," *JAOS*, 69 (1949), 140, 144–45.

[77] C. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, 1994), 5.

[78] Haarmann, "Auflösung," 55.

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capital importance for its account of the decline of the Mamlūk state under the sultans Qāytbāy, al-Ghawrī, and Ṭumānbāy, the defeat of the Mamlūks by the Ottomans, and the subsequent occupation of Egypt. Even though Ibn Iyās was a scion of Mamlūks on both sides of his family and held a sizable fief (*iqṭāʿ*), he himself was not prominent enough to be included in any of the biographical notices of the time, perhaps because he held no public office; nor was he, like Ibn Taghrī Birdī and al-ʿAynī, an intimate of sultans. Regarding his education, it is known only that he was a student of the famous scholar al-Suyūṭī and the Ḥanafī jurist ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl.[79] Later, the income derived from his fief enabled him to devote himself at his leisure to his history of Egypt: *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾiʿ al-Duhūr* (*Marvellous Blooms among Events of the Times*), which ends with 922/1528. For the period prior to his own lifetime, Ibn Iyās states that he relied on approximately thirty-seven histories.[80] Predictably, the work becomes more detailed for events and biographies of the author's own era, when he divides the annals into monthly records of events interspersed with biographies, almost in the form of a diary. Also remarkable is the frequent citation of verses, sometimes of the historian's own composition. But it is, of course, as an observer and interpreter of the transition from Mamlūk to Ottoman rule that Ibn Iyās gained his status as a worthy successor to the great historians of the Circassian period. With them he shared a propensity to criticize the Circassian sultans in contrast to the Baḥrī Turks, but once the former had been defeated by the Ottomans, "he almost completely forgets all the evils of the *ancien régime*, which he himself had so frequently exposed and castigated, and embarks on an idealization of that regime, turning all his fury against the Ottoman."[81] However, despite Ibn Iyas's shifting subjectivity, his annals of the last years of the Mamlūk sultanate and the inception of Ottoman rule are universally admired by modern historians, who use such language as "a towering figure among chroniclers of the later Middle Ages in Egypt" to characterize Ibn Iyās[82] and "superb chronicle" to judge his work.[83]

The compilation of vast biographical dictionaries continued during the Burjī period. Some of these were highly specialized, focusing, for example, on scholars of a specific legal school, while others, following in the footsteps

[79] *EI2*, III, 812.

[80] M. Muṣṭafā (ed.), *Unpublished Pages of the Chronicle of Ibn Iyās, AH 857–872/AD 1453–1468*, (Cairo, 1951), 23.

[81] Ayalon, "Mamlūk Military Aristocracy during the First Years of the Ottoman Occupation of Egypt," in C. Bosworth (ed.), *The Islamic World, from Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton, 1989), 420.

[82] Petry, *Protectors*, 7.

[83] Ayalon, "Aristocracy," 413; cf. M. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī* (New Brunswick and London, 1982), 5.

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of al-Ṣafadī, sketched the lives of notable individuals from many spheres of Mamlūk society. Among the latter, the works of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, and al-Sakhāwī are essential sources for modern historians of the Mamlūks.

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (773–852/1372–1449) was one of the most prominent religious figures in Egypt of his time. An indefatigable scholar of the science of *ḥadīth*, he taught it in numerous Mamlūk educational institutions in Cairo and compiled voluminous works on various aspects of the subject. With his acknowledged expertise on this linchpin of the law, it was inevitable that he should be drafted into the judicial bureaucracy, which, in fact, he headed intermittently as chief Shāfi'ī judge for twenty-one years.[84] Notwithstanding his preoccupation with jurisprudence and the law, Ibn Ḥajar found time to cultivate his interest in history and wrote both a chronicle and a biographical dictionary. *Inbā' al-Ghumr fī Abnā' al 'Umr* (*Information for the Uninitiated about the Men of the Time*) comprises an annalistic history of the Mamlūk state during his own lifetime, beginning with the year of his birth to 850/1446, two years before his death. Focus on a limited period is also characteristic of his biographical dictionary entitled *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī A'yān al-Mi'a al-Thāmina* (*Hidden Pearls Regarding the Notables of the Eighth Century*). It contains no less than 5,204 biographies of persons from every walk of life, mainly Egyptians and Syrians, who happened to have died between 700 and 799 AH. Given the fact that the author was not born until 773, his data are derived almost exclusively from written sources, most notably al-Ṣafadī. Nevertheless, the accessibility of the work and its integration of a variety of materials make it an indispensable reference for the lives of Baḥrī Mamlūk notables.

Though Ibn Taghrī Birdī is renowned chiefly for his two chronicles, both of which contain obituaries, he was also author of a major biographical dictionary, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī wa-al-Mustawfī ba'd al-Wāfī* (*The Pure Pool and Completion of al-Wāfī*). As the title indicates, the work was intended as a companion volume to al-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafāyāt*, upon which Ibn Taghrī Birdī relied heavily, since *al-Manhal* contains biographies of notables who died during the period 650/1252 to 862/1458. Like al-Ṣafadī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī aimed at comprehensiveness, and the 2,822 biographies cover political and military leaders of the Mamlūk empire and beyond, as well as prominent scholars, writers, scientists, and other celebrities. Obviously *al-Manhal* is valuable primarily for information on the author's contemporaries. Curiously, in the light of his reliance on al-Ṣafadī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī was highly critical of him, berating him as a provincial Syrian litterateur who could not keep track of dates or affairs of state in the capital in Egypt.[85]

[84] Ziyāda, *Al-Mu'arrikhūn*, 19. [85] Little, *Introduction*, 108.

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Like Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Taghrī Birdī, the third main biographer of the period was also an annalist. Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī (830–902/1427–97) was the author of continuations of both al-Dhahabī's and al-Maqrīzī's chronicles. The latter, *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhayl al-Sulūk* (*Refined Gold as Sequel to* [al-Maqrīzī's] *Sulūk*), was commissioned by the amīr Yashbak, a leading officer during the reigns of Khushqadam and Qāytbāy, but his attempts to provide patronage to al-Sakhāwī were not always successful.[86] Al-Sakhāwī's main interest was *ḥadīth*. Like his teacher, Ibn Ḥajar, he wrote numerous books on this subject and taught in various *madrasas* in Cairo. His magnum opus, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsiʿ* (*Brilliant Light on People of the Ninth Century*), was obviously patterned after Ibn Ḥajar's biographical dictionary of the previous century. Reflecting al-Sakhāwī's professional interest, the majority of his 12,000-plus biographies deal with scholars specialized in some aspect of *ḥadīth*, but again, like Ibn Ḥajar, al-Sakhāwī included notables outside the field of scholarship. In any case, Petry deems the *Ḍawʾ* to be one of the foremost primary sources for research on the *ʿulamāʾ* of the central Islamic lands in pre-modern times.[87] While it is true that the work is written in the Muslim biographical tradition, it is distinctly personal in several respects. First of all, al-Sakhāwī saw fit to include a long and detailed account of his own life. This is highly unusual, though helpful to our understanding of the author. Also unusual are his judgments, often negative and sometimes derisory, of the shortcomings of his biographees, including Ibn Taghrī Birdī and the polymath al-Suyūṭī. Even though the acknowledged purpose of recording biographies was to highlight the positive contribution that a person had made to the Muslim community, al-Sakhāwī did not hesitate to berate those who did not meet his standards of accuracy and reliability in transmitting historical data. Justification for this stance is found in his apologetic essay on historiography as a religious science derived from the science of *ḥadīth*: *al-Iʿlān bi-Taʾbīkh li-Man dhamma Ahl-Taʾrīkh* (*The Open Denunciation of the Adverse Critics of Historians*). Finally, *al-Ḍawʾ* is unique among the biographical dictionaries of the Ayyubid and Mamlūk periods for the attention it gives to women. It is true that both Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Taghrībirdī wove the lives of a few female scholars and sultans' wives into their alphabetized biographies of men, but al-Sakhāwī devoted a final, separate, volume to eminent women of the ninth century. Admittedly, this volume represents only a twelfth of the total work, but this is substantially more space than that normally assigned to women by medieval Muslim biographers.[88]

[86] Ziyāda, *Al-Muʾarrikhūn*, 42–43. [87] *EI*2, VIII, 882.

[88] See H. Lutfi, "Al-Sakhāwī's *Kitāb al-Nisāʾ* as a Source for the Social and Economic History of Muslim Women during the Fifteenth Century AD," *The Muslim World*, 71 (1981), 104–24.

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A major achievement of medieval Arabic historiography came in the form of *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā fī Ṣināʿat al-Inshāʾ* (*Dawn for the Benighted Regarding the Chancery Craft*) by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1355–1418). Despite his education in jurisprudence and his intention of becoming a Shāfiʿī judge, al-Qalqashandī became instead a secretary in the chancery during the reign of the first Burjī sultan, Barqūq.[89] His work in thirteen volumes was designed like those of al-ʿUmarī and al-Nuwayrī of the Baḥrī period as a reference for scribes employed by the chancery and, strictly speaking, was not designed as a historical work at all. Nevertheless, it is invaluable to historians of Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk Egypt for the detailed data it contains on the geographical and administrative units of these empires. But the *Ṣubḥ* is indispensable above all for the large number of diplomatic and administrative documents that al-Qalqashandī transcribed and analyzed from the point of view of a chancery official. Since, as noted at the outset, so few documents have survived from medieval archives, these copies are of considerable importance both as substantive sources and as samples for comparison with original Mamlūk documents that have survived in such repositories as Christian monasteries in Jerusalem and the Sinai, the Archives in Cairo, and the Islamic Museum at al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem.[90]

[89] *EI*2, IV, 509.
[90] See Little, "Documents," 9–12.

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16

Egypt in the world system of the later Middle Ages

R. STEPHEN HUMPHREYS

In Islamic times, as in all other phases of its long history, Egypt cannot be comprehended or analyzed in isolation. It was always embedded in a series of larger complexes, whether political, economic, or cultural. Whether it is useful to call the totality of these complexes a "world system" is a question best deferred until a later point in this chapter. Whatever we call them, these complexes were constantly evolving and shifting, as was Egypt's role within them. It is natural but misleading to identify one moment as normative and to judge all other periods against that one. We shall be very badly misled, for example, if we focus on Egypt in the half-century after 1300, when the borders of its empire were secure, its armies were triumphant, its cities were bursting with new construction, it was the linchpin between two flourishing trade zones in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, and its centrality in the intellectual and religious life of the Arabic-speaking Sunnī world was uncontested. There are periods, and they are in fact quite common, when Egypt was but a marginal player, and that within a rather small arena.

An understanding of Egypt's place in its Eurasian and African milieu, then, must begin with some reflections on periodization. The terminal dates for our essay, 641 and 1517, are clear-cut and unambiguous. The first represents the moment at which Egypt was abruptly wrenched out of Constantinople's political, economic, and religious orbit; the second is that moment when it was just as abruptly and unexpectedly dragged back in. Byzantine Egypt and Ottoman Egypt differed from each other in a thousand ways, but there are important structural similarities. Both belonged to empires of remarkably similar shape and size, focused on the intersection of an east–west axis linking Europe and Asia, and a north–south axis connecting the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean. Both were politically subordinate and economically tributary to the same imperial capital. Both were influential centers of religious life and thought, but the most powerful and prestigious centers lay elsewhere. Both were vitally important provinces, but provinces nonetheless.

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In the 875 years that separated the end of Byzantine domination and the beginning of Ottoman rule and that are conventionally identified as the Middle Ages, however, Egypt was situated within a strikingly different matrix – or rather, a succession of matrices. Sometimes, as in Byzantine and Ottoman times, Egypt was only a subordinate element within a vast empire, but it was an empire of very different shape and character – an immense continental domain stretching across north Africa and southwest Asia, whose political, economic, and cultural focal point was central Iraq. At other times Egypt was part of a much smaller regional complex comprising only Syria-Palestine, the Red Sea littoral, and the eastern Maghrib. Only in the later Middle Ages did Egypt become a major imperial center, with all that implied in the arenas of commerce, religious influence, and cultural expression – and even then it was only one imperial center among many others no less powerful, prestigious, and wealthy.

Egypt's path from conquered province to imperial metropolis was by no means straight and uncomplicated. When Egypt was captured by an Arab Muslim expeditionary force in the 640s, after a remarkably easy campaign, no one could have predicted the size and durability of the new empire ballooning out of Arabia. Indeed, in the late 650s and again in the 680s, that empire seemed on the verge of dissolution. Nor did the Arab Muslim conquerors sink deep roots in Egypt for many decades. The country was garrisoned by a few thousand tribal levies, stationed largely in the military cantonment of Fusṭāṭ at the apex of the Delta. The fiscal administration continued to be carried out in Greek, as it had been for a thousand years. Outside Alexandria (which continued to have many Greek-speakers), the overwhelming majority of the population consisted of native Egyptians, who used Coptic as the language of everyday life and the Church. Apart from the governor's palace and the garrison troops, neither Arabic nor Islam had any significant role in Egyptian life. Moreover, Islam was still a religion in the making; it could hardly compete with the sophisticated theology and liturgical richness of the Coptic or Greek Orthodox Churches.

As the caliphal regime stabilized in the 690s, Egypt found itself embedded within a far larger empire than a century earlier, but its place within that empire was markedly less significant than it had been in Byzantine times. Apart from the garrison troops who helped instigate the revolt against the caliph 'Uthmān in 655–56, Egypt played no real part in the political struggles of the late seventh and eighth centuries. Egypt had ceased to be the granary of Constantinople, and now adopted the more modest role of granary for the holy cities of the Ḥijāz. Egypt was no doubt a vital source of revenue for the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus, but its fiscal importance for the central government was significantly reduced by the transfer of the capital to Baghdad after the 'Abbāsid seizure of power in 750.

Egypt's role in international commerce likewise shrank markedly in early

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Islamic times. The once dynamic Red Sea route to east Africa and India had largely withered away in the course of the sixth century. The Indian Ocean trade was now channeled through the Persian Gulf, and would continue to be so as this commerce burgeoned under 'Abbāsid and Būyid sponsorship between the eighth and eleventh centuries.[1] In the Mediterranean basin, trade was badly disrupted (though it did not disappear) in the turmoil of the seventh century, no doubt partly because of the naval confrontation between Muslim and Byzantine fleets, but also because of the economic regression of Latin Europe. Such trade as there was between the eastern and western Mediterranean was now channeled through Constantinople rather than Egypt.[2]

Even in the cultural realm Egypt took a step backward. Alexandria had been a major protagonist, often the most important one, in the Trinitarian and Christological debates between the fourth and sixth centuries. That role of course disappeared with the imposition of Arab-Muslim rule, and it was slow to be replaced by any Islamic equivalent. By the early 700s Islam was beginning to articulate its theological doctrines and legal-ethical norms in an increasingly sophisticated fashion, but the key centers of this activity lay in Kūfa and Baṣra, in Damascus and Ḥimṣ, in Mecca and Medina. Until the late eighth century, Egypt was very much a junior partner in this enterprise.

Only in the ninth century did Egypt begin to play a major role in the greater Muslim world. By the end of the eighth century Fusṭāṭ had become a significant center of Islamic learning (though it hardly rivalled Medina or the cities of Iraq), and its position was secured by the fact that Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 820) spent the later years of his life there. The *madhhab* attached to his name spread and took root in many places throughout the eastern Islamic lands, but Egypt would always remain a key center of Shāfi'ī doctrine.

The growing role of Fusṭāṭ in Islamic thought and practice was certainly connected with demographic and cultural changes within the country as well. By the middle decades of the ninth century, Lower Egypt at least had undergone a considerable process of Arabization and Islamization, owing in part to conversion and acculturation among the native population and in part to large-scale immigration by Arab tribes.[3] Egypt's changing position was also enhanced by the slow consolidation of an Arab Muslim society and culture in north Africa and Spain, for Egypt was the natural conduit for material and intellectual exchange between the eastern and western Islamic

[1] J. I. Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire, 29 BC–AD 641* (Oxford, 1969); A. Wink, *Al-Hind. The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden, 1990), I, 25–64.

[2] H. Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (New York, 1939), long since superseded but still seminal. A good overview of the debate is given in A. F. Havighurst (ed.), *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism, and Revision*, 3rd edn. (Lexington, MA, 1976).

[3] I. M. Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 2 (1972), 248–62.

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lands. (This would be a role of growing importance in the following centuries, culminating perhaps in the thirteenth.) Most of all, Egypt benefited from the weakening of Baghdād's control over the outlying provinces of the 'Abbāsid empire, and in particular from the catastrophic if temporary collapse of caliphal authority caused by the assassination of al-Mutawakkil in 861. The almost immediate devolution of power into the hands of local governors throughout the empire was replicated in Egypt with the rise of the Ṭūlūnids (reigned 868–905). Although the caliphal government in Baghdād was able to oust the last Ṭūlūnid and reassert direct control over Egypt after 905, it could not maintain its hard-won position for very long, for by the 930s the 'Abbāsid caliphs had suffered a new and this time irreversible loss of power and prestige. As they became the virtual prisoners of one or another generalissimo in Baghdād, even the caliphate's core provinces became autonomous states under local warlords.

The middle of the tenth century marked a watershed in the history of Islamic Egypt on several levels. In the political arena, the country moved from loose 'Abbāsid control to autonomy under the Ikhshīdids (935–969), and then to being the central province of a dynamic, expansionist new state, the Fāṭimid caliphate. Had the Fāṭimids succeeded in their program, which was to rule the whole realm of Islam, Egypt might soon have sunk back into its old provincial status. But the new dynasty's failure to advance beyond Damascus ensured that Egypt and its new capital of Cairo would remain the core of the Fāṭimid caliphate until its demise in 1171. The Fāṭimids never ruled a terribly large domain; at its peak between 975 and 1025, their empire reached from Tunisia and Sicily in the west to Ḥimṣ and Tripoli in the east. By the middle of the eleventh century, the Fāṭimids would lose their western possessions, and by the 1070s they were struggling to keep a foothold in Palestine in the face of Turkish incursions. After the coming of the crusaders, of course, they lost even that and retreated within Egypt's traditional frontiers. Even so, the Fāṭimid caliphate was the largest and most durable state to be centered in Egypt since the Ptolemies thirteen centuries earlier. Although the Fāṭimids fell far short of their immense ambitions, they laid both the territorial and institutional foundations for the imperial role that Egypt would assume until the Ottoman conquest.

Fāṭimid propaganda always claimed that the reign of the true Imam would usher in the messianic (or pre-messianic) age of prosperity and security, and for almost a century after the Fāṭimid conquest Egypt seems to have enjoyed that enviable but elusive state of things, though there were obviously ups and downs. A crucial and highly favorable shift in Egypt's position vis-à-vis the international trade routes occurred in the early eleventh century. This shift was perhaps due in part to the conscious policy of the Fāṭimid Imāms and their officials, but its main causes lay beyond the control of any Egyptian government. First of all, there was the slow but unmistak-

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able revival of a market economy in Latin Europe, and this economic revival fed a growth in the seaborne commerce between Italy and the seaports of Egypt. For the first time in many centuries, Egypt began to develop substantial ties not only with the entrepôts of Italy but also (albeit indirectly) with the transalpine lands which these served. These links between Egypt and Latin Europe were reinforced by the continuing trade with the Maghrib, and especially with Tunisia (Ifrīqiya). Via Tunisia, Egypt was connected to Africa, Norman Sicily, and Muslim Andalus.[4] Second, the early eleventh century witnessed a decline, and ultimately a near collapse, in the Persian Gulf route to India and East Africa, probably due in large part to the political turmoil and intensifying economic problems in Iraq and south-western Iran. Under these circumstances, the Indian Ocean trade was rerouted to the Red Sea ports of Egypt.[5] By the middle of the eleventh century, Egypt was the principal hinge between the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean basins, the point at which the complex commercial networks of these two zones were knotted together. Egypt's new (or at least revived) position in the African and Eurasian trade system would endure and grow, and would be a defining element of Egypt's place in the world until the end of Mamlūk times.

The Fāṭimid era also witnessed an ethnic, cultural, and religious transition in Egypt. Essentially, Cairo and the Delta became solidly Arabized and Islamized, though obviously Coptic Christian pockets remained. There was a continuing inflow of nomadic Arab tribes from Arabia (especially the notorious Banū Hilāl and Banū Sulaym), but for the most part we are dealing with conversion to Islam and the adoption of Arabic speech by the indigenous population of the country. The same process was by now well under way in Upper Egypt as far south as Qūṣ, though here Christian communities remained not only prominent but in a majority for many centuries. However, even in Christian areas we see a rapid fading of the Coptic language except as a liturgical language. By the middle of the tenth century, senior churchmen found it necessary to use Arabic for their secular writings. Thus we have the world chronicle composed in the 930s by Eutychius (Saʿīd ibn al-Biṭrīq, 877–940), Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria. In the second half of the century, Severus (Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, d. ca. 980), Coptic bishop of Ashmūnayn, collected and translated Greek and Coptic

[4] S. D. Goitein, "Medieval Tunisia – the Hub of the Mediterranean," in Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, 1966), 308–28; R. S. Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950–1350* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971), 56–84.

[5] A. Wink, *Al-Hind*, I, 56–59; Bernard Lewis, "The Fāṭimids and the route to India," *Revue de la Faculté de Sciences Économiques de l'Université d'Istanbul*, 11e année (Oct. 1949–Jul. 1950); Jean Aubin, "La ruine de Siraf et les routes du Golfe Persique aux XIe et XIIe siècles," *Cahiers de l'Histoire Médiévale*, 10–13 (1959), 187–99.

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materials in the monasteries of Egypt for his *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*.[6]

Although Fāṭimid religious doctrine seemed deviant (at best) to most Muslims, the Fāṭimid caliphate played a crucial role in Islamic religious thought. Since Ismā'īlī doctrine in the tenth and eleventh centuries was elaborated under the aegis and sometimes the direct supervision of the Fāṭimid imāms, Egypt came for the first time to have a central place in the definition of Islam, albeit within relatively restricted and highly secretive circles. Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism was especially influential in Iran, but ultimately it found a home in regions as dispersed as the Yemen and Gujarat.[7] But the Fāṭimid contribution to Islamic thought goes far beyond the development of its own doctrine. The Ismā'īlī theological challenge demanded and evoked a serious response from leading Imāmi (Twelver) and Sunnī circles, not least Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). Moreover, the determination of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his Ayyūbid successors not only to root out the Ismā'īlī infestation in Egypt, but also to make the country a major center of Sunnī learning, is an ironic tribute to the Fāṭimid achievement in this sphere.

At first glance the twelfth century seems an inglorious moment in Egyptian history. The Fāṭimid regime slowly rotted away and lost whatever prestige it had in the Islamic world at large, even among most Ismā'īlīs. Unable to defend Palestine against the crusaders, the Fāṭimids became progressively unable to defend Egypt itself. The dynasty's demise in 1171 was hardly a shock to any attentive observer. Yet the impression of Egyptian weakness and marginality is very misleading. Egypt continued to be one of the major eastern termini (along with Constantinople and Acre) of the Mediterranean trade, which expanded rapidly throughout the twelfth century. Likewise, the Indian Ocean trade was growing apace, along with European demand for the luxury products of "India." The Fāṭimid fiscal administration was still able to support the costs of a lavish palace establishment and a large if ineffective army. In short, when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn came to power in 1169 (initially as Fāṭimid wazīr), Egypt could provide him with the financial resources to launch his own ambitious agenda, though perhaps not to complete it.[8]

We need not examine most of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's policies in Egypt, since they really affected only the internal affairs of the country. However, some of them had a large and direct impact on Egypt's place in the world outside its

[6] Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976), 71–123; S. Labib, "Ibn al-Muḳaffa'"; *EI2*, F. Micheau, "Sa'īd ibn al-Biṭrīḳ," *EI2*.

[7] I. K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Isma'ili Literature* (Malibu, CA, 1977); Nagib Tajdin, *A Bibliography of Ismā'ilism* (Delmar, NY, 1985).

[8] Claude Cahen, *Makhzūmiyyat* (Leiden, 1977); A. S. Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin* (Albany, NY, 1972), esp. chs. 6, 8, 12.

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boundaries. First, he strove to make Egypt a major center of Sunnī religious thought, and in this policy he was energetically followed by the later Ayyūbids. His purpose was in part to root out the vestiges of the Ismā'īlī heresy, but he was also following the model laid down by Nūr al-Dīn in Syria – namely, demonstrating his profound commitment to the Sunnī cause by surrounding himself with scholars of unimpeachable piety and learning, and by providing generously for the support of these scholars.[9]

In fact Egypt had always remained a predominantly Sunnī country under Fāṭimid rule, and in the twelfth century it produced a fair number of reputable Shāfi'ī and Mālikī scholars. But when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn seized power, the key centers of Sunnī thought were Damascus, Baghdād, and the cities of Khurāsān. Egypt (or more properly, Cairo) could only move to the forefront as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his successors recruited scholars from Syria, Mesopotamia, Iraq, and Iran and provided them with appropriate livings. By the end of Ayyūbid rule in Egypt (1250), Cairo already rivalled Damascus and probably surpassed Baghdād as the principal center of Sunnī scholarship in the Islamic world. The sacking of Baghdād by the Mongols eight years later served only to confirm Cairo's standing. Although Damascus continued to have scholars of international reputation down through the fourteenth century, it is clear that Cairo had long since become the center of gravity. Under the Ayyūbid aegis, Egypt would quickly produce a strong corps of Sunnī scholars, but now was and would remain a powerful magnet for those from other lands as well. It was thus Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his successors who made Cairo an international center of Sunnī thought and education, a role which Cairo would retain down through the Mamlūk period.[10]

Besides being an ardent partisan of Sunnī Islam, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was also an empire-builder. Though he never resided in Egypt after 1179, he made it the center of a rapidly expanding empire. At his death, the lands which he ruled either directly or through closely supervised clients comprised not only Egypt and Syria (including most of the territories recently held by the Franks), but Mesopotamia, the Yemen, and Cyrenaica. His forces had penetrated deep into Nubia, though they could not maintain themselves there. Since Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn followed the political custom of his day in distributing these vast territories (the Ayyūbid Cconfederation, to give them a name) to his kinsmen in the form of hereditary and largely autonomous

[9] N. Élisséeff, *Nur al-Din. Un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des Croisades*, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1967), III, 750–80.

[10] Damascus has been studied in L. Pouzet, *Damas au VIIe/XIIIe s. Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut, 1988), and M. Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994). For the rise of Cairo see J. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992); on the culmination of the process see Carl Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981).

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appanages, the whole enterprise carried less weight than one might have surmised. But by any standards Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's was a large empire, and Egypt was the keystone of the edifice.

In itself, the bloody seizure of power by the Ayyūbid dynasty's mamlūk guards in 1250 changed very little. The new rulers represented a different style of government (rule by military junta rather than by hereditary succession), but there was nothing in their religious or economic policy that deviated from the lines already laid down by the Ayyūbids. This situation was altered by the Mongol invasions, which placed Egypt in a radically new international context. The sack of Baghdād and the destruction of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in 1258 left Cairo as the only major Muslim metropolis between the Nile and central Asia which was not under Mongol control. When the Mongols swept through Syria almost unopposed in the winter and spring of 1260, Cairo itself seemed on the verge of falling. The Mamlūk victory at 'Ayn Jālūt (September 3, 1260) retrieved the situation for the moment, but it did nothing to end the Mongol threat to Syria and Egypt. For the new and still untried Mamlūk sultans, the crucial military and political challenge for the next half-century would be that of defending their territories against the Mongol armies of Īlkhānid Iran. In facing this challenge, they pursued a policy which on the one hand was cautious and defensive, on the other bold and far-reaching.

Mamlūk foreign policy in the late thirteenth century does much to reveal the complex ties which linked Egypt to the outside world and so requires a fairly close review.[11] This policy rested on three major premises. First, the Mamlūk empire (in contrast to its Ayyūbid predecessor) was a highly centralized state; the empire rested on the fiscal resources of Egypt, and the exploitation of these resources was directed from the Cairo Citadel. In the Mamlūk scheme of things, Syria was regarded chiefly as a strategically vital frontier zone, whose own economic and political interests were of secondary concern. Second, the Mamlūk empire had two enemies, the Mongols of Ilkhānid Iran and the crusaders on the Syro-Palestinian littoral. Assessing the relative danger posed by one or the other was a constant problem. After the humiliating failure of Louis IX's expedition in 1250, the likelihood of new crusades faded markedly, but only a fool would have written off the danger completely. Moreover, there was always the threat of a Frankish–Mongol alliance. Third, the Mamlūks took power at an extremely turbulent moment in the political history of the Mediterranean basin. Two zones were of particular importance. In Italy, the confrontation between the papacy and the Hohenstaufen also involved the ruling house of France, the kingdom of Aragon, the Ḥafṣids of Tūnis, and the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII. In

[11] R. S. Humphreys, "Ayyūbids, Mamlūks, and the Latin East in the Thirteenth Century," *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 2 (1998), 1–17.

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the east, the struggles over Constantinople between the Byzantines and their countless enemies were inevitably connected with the bitter rivalries between Genoa, Pisa, and Venice to control the Levant trade.

In the face of all this, the early Mamlūk sultans (specifically Baybars and Qalāwūn) constituted their empire as a fortress. In their judgment, their empire could not hope to pursue an expansionist policy with any prospects of success; indeed, unbridled expansionism would almost surely lead to disaster. What they could do was to secure the borders of Egypt and Syria and convert these lands into a powerful citadel which the enemies of Islam could not penetrate. To the north, the Taurus mountains constituted a deep frontier zone (as they had throughout the interminable wars with Byzantium between the eighth and tenth centuries). To the east, the Euphrates allowed only a few crossing points for the Mongol armies, and these were readily defensible. To the west, the Mediterranean could serve as an effective rampart if the Syro-Palestinian seaports were dismantled. The destruction of these port facilities as they were one by one recaptured from the Franks inevitably crippled the once lucrative seaborne commerce with Syria. From a Mamlūk perspective, however, it made good political as well as military sense to channel the whole Mediterranean trade through Alexandria, since the revenues would go directly to the regime in Cairo, while Syria's provincial governors would be deprived of an independent source of income which they might use for their own purposes.

A fortress which waits passively for the enemy to encamp beneath its gates is ill-defended, and that certainly was not the policy of the early Mamlūk sultans. They pursued an active diplomacy on several fronts, aimed both at frustrating the ambitions of their Frankish and Mongol opponents and at securing the resources that their empire needed for its defense. Thus Baybars's negotiations with the Hohenstaufen and their Angevin successors in Italy and Sicily were meant to check papal efforts to mount a new crusade. His treaties with Byzantium, Genoa, and the Golden Horde secured the vital commerce in Turkish slaves from the north shore of the Black Sea to Egypt. Mamlūk ties with the Golden Horde also helped keep the Īlkhānids preoccupied with their exposed and strategically important Caucasus frontier.

Even this brief review of early Mamlūk diplomacy shows the central place which the early Mamlūk empire (and Egypt in particular) occupied within a vast international arena, and that this place was determined by the intertwined political and economic realities of the period. It is important to stress that these underlying realities lay beyond the control of any Egyptian ruler; the achievement of Baybars and Qalāwūn was to perceive how to bend them to their advantage. Thus, the early Mamlūk empire derived exceptional prestige from the fact that it was the only major Muslim state between the Atlantic Ocean and the Hindu Kush which could hold its own against powerful non-Muslim enemies – the only one which could defend the cause

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of Islam in a desperate age. The Mongols had overwhelmed every Muslim state in central Asia, Iran, Iraq, and Anatolia. At the other end of the Muslim world, the Almohad Empire had dissolved in the face of the Castilian and Aragonese onslaught. Andalus now lay almost entirely in Christian hands, and although the Marinids in Morocco and the Ḥafṣids in Tūnis gradually shaped viable polities out of the chaos, they were obviously destined to remain minor powers. Only beyond the Hindu Kush and the Indus river was there a Muslim state, that of the Delhi sultans, which in any sense stood at the same level as the Mamlūks of Egypt and Syria. Among his other talents, Baybars was a superb propagandist, and he knew how to exploit the unique position of his empire to the fullest advantage.

The political and military stature of the Mamlūk empire was in the end secured by the wealth at its disposal. To a considerable degree, this was a matter of extracting taxes and dues out of the long-suffering but highly productive Egyptian peasant. The early Mamlūks obviously collected everything they could, but by the standards of their age they were not abusive. Baybars in particular not only insisted on a strict standard of fiscal administration and justice, but made a substantial investment in Egypt's agricultural infrastructure.[12] However, the Mamlūk empire did not have to live off its own resources. Mediterranean commerce grew steadily in volume and institutional sophistication throughout the thirteenth century, and this commerce was more and more closely integrated with the rising manufacturing and commercial economies of the Low Countries and the Baltic. All the evidence we have indicates that the Indian Ocean trade was flourishing in the same way. Egypt was of course the point of intersection between the two trade zones, and the Mamlūk regime (along with many merchants) derived a vast income as a result. But quite apart from the transit trade – essentially a matter of the transshipment of Indian spices and precious woods to Latin Europe – the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean economies were each vital and self-sustaining systems.

We cannot go into any detail on the organization of these commercial systems, but a few comments are necessary.[13] As in centuries past, Egypt continued to supply its own agricultural and manufactured goods (sugar, linen textiles, glass, ceramics, and so on) to European markets. European merchants (largely Italian and Catalan) had manufactured goods of their own to contribute to the exchange, especially fine wools, but their exports fell short of the combined total of Egyptian and Indian imports, and the difference was paid in silver coin. On the other side, Egypt had little to send

[12] P. Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt. Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P. M. Holt (London and New York, 1992), 251–5, gives a balanced assessment.

[13] Wink, *Al-Hind*, II (1996); Lopez, *Commercial Revolution*, chs. 4–6; S. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter, 1171–1517* (Wiesbaden, 1965).

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to India except gold; fortunately, Egypt's access to the gold trade of western Africa provided ample quantities of this metal. So long as silver and gold were regarded solely as commodities, and so long as they were adequately available, favorable or unfavorable trade balances posed no significant problems. The system was quite able to sustain itself.

On the other hand, Egypt's merchants no longer traveled on the Mediterranean trade routes, as they had throughout the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. By now, the seaborne legs of this commerce were almost exclusively in the hands of Italian or Catalan merchants, traveling on European ships. For this change, there were several causes. In earlier times, Muslim navies were able to protect Muslim merchant vessels, but by the end of the twelfth century the Italian fleets had obtained a near-monopoly of naval power. In principle, Muslim merchants could have sailed on European ships, and a few did, but in practice that was difficult because the Italian city states did not allow Muslim merchants to reside there. Byzantine Constantinople did permit this, as it had for many centuries, but it no longer lay astride Egypt's principal trade routes (apart from that of the Genoese-dominated Black Sea slave trade). In the Indian Ocean, things were very different; there the western half of that network was largely in the hands of Egyptian and perhaps Yemeni merchants.

From one major commercial network the Mamlūk empire benefited only marginally if at all. In spite of the destruction caused by the Mongol conquests, they did create a kind of *pax mongolica* which revitalized the transcontinental trade routes between China and Anatolia for about a century (ca. 1250–1350).[14] These routes had a great impact in many regions, especially in northern Iran and the lands bordering the Black Sea, but Mamlūk Egypt's main commercial links with Yüan China followed the Indian Ocean sea lanes. The Mamlūk–China trade, though quite extensive, was indirect: Egyptian and Yemeni merchants traveled to the west coast of India, and there their goods were exchanged for Chinese merchandise brought through the South China Sea and the Malacca Straits.

At this point, we need to ask whether early Mamlūk Egypt had become integrated within a "world system."[15] That is a useful concept only if we are content to define a world system in minimal terms, as a set of autonomous but interlocking political and economic zones. Defining these zones can of course be an interesting and frustrating exercise. But in any case, there is no question in this period of any one of these zones being able to impose terms of trade on the others; the concepts of core and periphery, however useful

[14] H. W. Haussig, *Geschichte Zentralasiens und der Seidenstrasse im islamischer Zeit* (Darmstadt, 1988).

[15] Defined originally in I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, I (New York, 1974); re-examined for the later Middle Ages by Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World-System AD 1250–1350* (Oxford, 1989).

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for the sixteenth century and later, throw little light on the thirteenth century. In terms of economic production and organization, the most powerful and dynamic zones were surely those in China and India. Both of these were sufficiently vast and complex to be almost self-sufficient, and neither showed any inclination to dominate the political-economic zones lying west of the Indian Ocean. What can be discerned in the late thirteenth century is a far more complex and multilayered set of interactions between the various zones, however defined, than can be found in any earlier period. In fact, the interlocking zones or regions of Eurasia and Africa to be seen in early Mamlūk times are the much same as those we see in the second century, but the intensity and depth of economic, cultural, and religious exchange is far greater.

The dynamic equilibrium of the late thirteenth century could not last, or at least it did not. As we pass into the fourteenth century we begin to confront a far more turbulent and much murkier world. There were vast changes in the demography, economy, and political structures of Eurasia, none of them for the better. Egypt was of course hit as hard by these changes as was any other region. Yet we cannot quite discern just what happened or how changes in one realm of life were related to those in another. Any account of Egypt's role within a "world system" in this period must therefore be provisional and highly conjectural.

We can begin with a group of intriguing parallels in the political life of Eurasia. The death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 1341 opened at least four decades of acute political instability in the Mamlūk empire.[16] The crisis in the Mamlūk regime was mirrored by political breakdown elsewhere, especially in the Mongol successor-states in Iran, central Asia, and China. That is, four of the most powerful empires in Eurasia came unglued almost simultaneously. Each of the Mamlūk, Īlkhānid, Chaghatayid, and Yüan states inevitably had its own dynamic, its own set of political tensions and fault-lines. Even so, it is tempting to ask if there is something more than coincidence in all this. By the last decades of the century, there was some restoration of political order throughout this immense area. The new Ming dynasty in China was by far the most successful in this effort, but the Mamlūk empire experienced a rough and ready consolidation of power under Barqūq (r. 1382–89, 1390–99) and his successors. The "restoration of order" in Iran and central Asia was a far crueler affair, since it was brought about by the bloody empire-building of Timūr-Lenk. Still, by 1400 there was again a relatively stable state system reaching from Egypt to China, and this system would endure more or less intact down to the last decade of the fifteenth century.

[16] Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamlūk History. The Third Reign of al-Nasir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn, 1310–1341* (Leiden, 1995).

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